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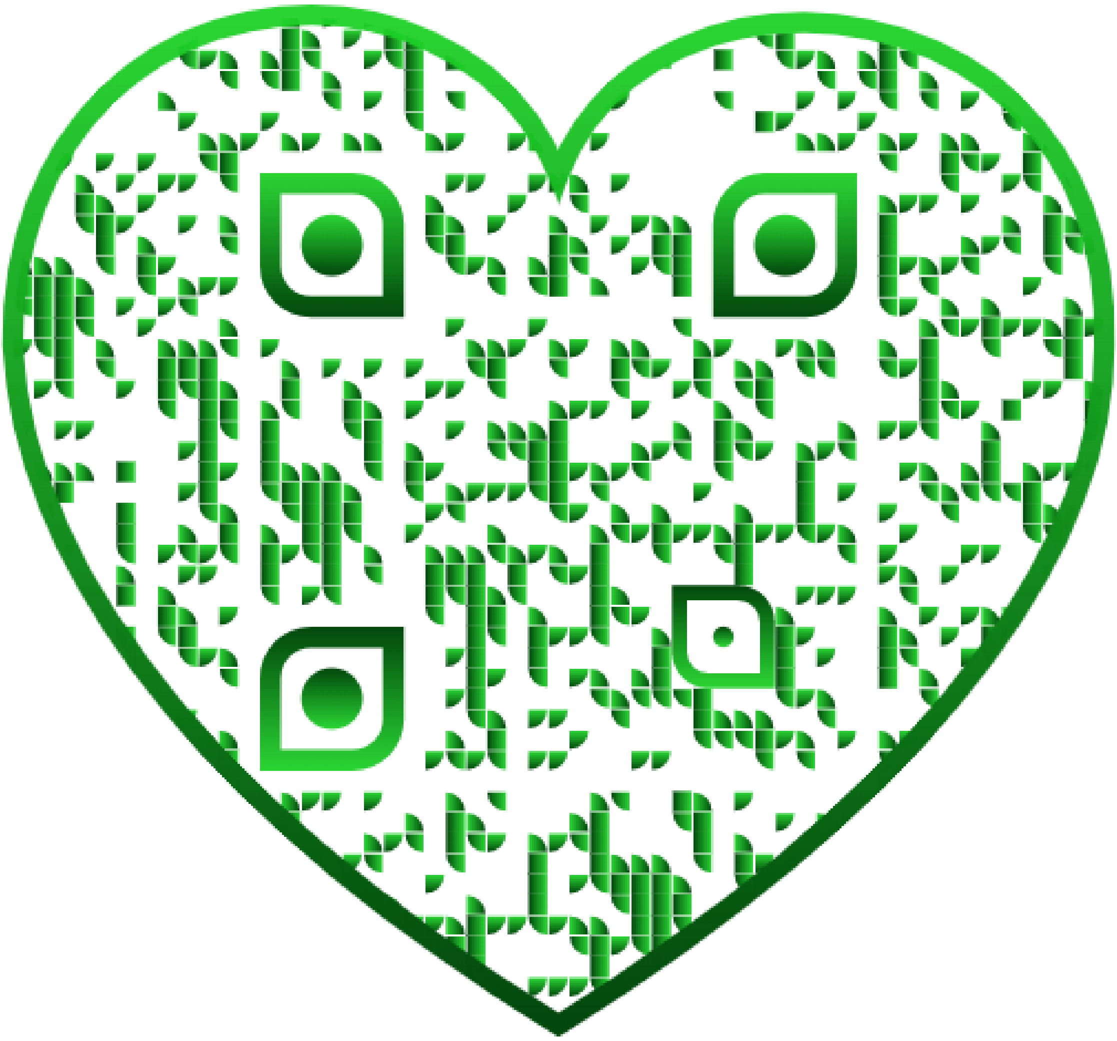

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BUSINESS TRAVELLER

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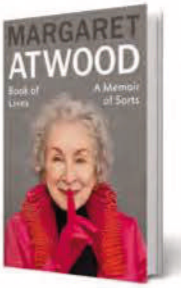

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EDITOR'S LETTER

WELCOME TO OUR annual awards issue where we celebrate excellence in global travel. After months of anticipation… the results are in! This year, we've refreshed the *Business Traveller* awards with a brand new format designed to reflect the ever-evolving travel landscape.

For the first time, we're unveiling a set of Global Awards, shaped by both public vote and insights from a panel of travel industry experts. Alongside these, our Regional Awards continue to spotlight the very best in European travel and hospitality, while our sister editions focus on the respective winners across the US and Asia-Pacific.

We've also introduced two new categories: a rail entry, recognising standout service on the tracks, and a sustainability award, honouring the companies making a meaningful impact in responsible travel.

The awards were officially announced at a spectacular ceremony in London's Sky Garden last month, where we welcomed industry friends and partners to celebrate the results. Turn to page 41 to discover this year's winners and why they've earned their place on the podium.

We're also excited to announce the new look of businesstraveller.com. Our redesigned website offers a sharper, cleaner experience, packed with exclusive content, expert features and all the regular updates and reviews.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we dive into some of travel's more surprising corners – from a global round-up of unusual room service menus (caviar hotline, anyone?) to the curious rise of water sommeliers.

Enjoy the issue, and congratulations to all the winners!

Tamsin Cocks

Tamsin Cocks
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS

CHRIS DWYER
WRITER
Chris is a food and travel writer who is constantly on the hunt for his next great meal. On page 26, he delves into the latest foodie trend: the rise of water sommeliers and curated H2O menus. Meanwhile on page 23, he heads over to Dublin to enjoy the city sights and a pint of the black stuff.

TAMARA HINSON
WRITER
Tamara is a UK-based travel writer with a passion for sustainable travel, sport and the outdoors. Constantly on the move, she is no stranger to hotel room service. On page 18, she rounds up a selection of unusual room service menus, from a guitar library to all-you-can-eat ice cream.

SIOBHAN GROGAN
WRITER
Siobhan is a travel, music and lifestyle writer. She began her career at *NME* and has written for *National Geographic Traveller, The Telegraph The Times* and more. In this issue, she explores the rise of airline stopover programmes and highlights some of the best options – turn to page 16.

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LETTERS & FORUM

Inbox

Readers share first-hand knowledge, experiences and ideas

CHEAP BUT CHEERFUL

As a previously highly active frequent flyer who uses Avios to fly in business class with BA, I did not relish the prospect of using easyJet for a package holiday to Croatia. We are privileged enough to be used to lounges, priority boarding, no charges for cabin or hold baggage and complimentary F&B.

We got to Gatwick in good time and found the whole process a breath of fresh air. We were checked in and our hold bag was on its way to the aircraft in no time. We used a Priority Pass lounge and presented ourselves in good time for boarding.

No nonsense, everyone onboard, doors closed and off we went. It was broadly the same on the return, and, I have to say, an absolute pleasure, if a little snug.

After hundreds of BA flights over the years, this was a hugely pleasant surprise. EasyJet did all it could to ensure that aircraft got into the air as soon as possible. Staff were polite and friendly but did not mess around when it came to enforcing the Row 1 overhead bin rite – we anticipated that we would need to put our luggage up top.

I won't switch from BA due to our Avios balance, but I will no longer hold trepidation about using a lower cost carrier. I will try to book Row 1 and speedy boarding, and eat prior to flying to reduce the onboard purchases to a tea and KitKat.

Tim Pike, Buckinghamshire

STAR LETTER

Little luxuries at 35,000 feet

After years of business travel, I've learned that flying economy doesn't mean sacrificing comfort – you just have to get creative. I've started building my own 'travel toolkit': a soft wrap, decent eye mask, good headphones and a few creature comforts (peppermint tea bags and a face mist go a long way mid-flight).

I also curate my own inflight entertainment: one podcast that makes me think, one that makes me laugh. It helps the hours pass quickly and keeps me in a better headspace for meetings on arrival.

It's not quite business class but, with a little planning, I land feeling far more human. Sometimes, it's the small things that make all the difference.

Courtenay Guy, Marlow

STAR PRIZE

This month's Star Letter writer will win a pair of VivoBarefoot's Sensus Obsidian Leather shoes, worth £150. Inspired by the earliest foot coverings crafted by humans, the shoes are made from premium wild hide leather and feature a 3mm sole "for a closer connection to Earth". For your chance to win a prize, email your letter to editorial@businesstraveller.com and include your full postal address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

SLIDING INTO OUR DMs

Would you recline your seat on a short-haul flight? Our Instagram followers voiced their thoughts. Watch our team debate the topic @businesstravelleruk

"I like to edge my seat inch by inch. But eventually... recline all the way!" ***@thedesignair***

"It blows my mind that people think they're entitled to dictate what someone else does with the seat they paid for. If I choose to recline, that's my right." ***@flightess***

"Complain to the airlines... you don't know if I'm connecting on a shorter flight and maybe I just had a red eye and I need to recline to rest." ***@willtravelforstories***

"Someone may recline their seat for medical reasons or might be on a different time zone." ***@worldwide_winston***

FORUM

COST OF PARKING FOR DISABLED TRAVELLERS AT AIRPORTS

‘Airports must address this inequity with fairer pricing’

PETROCS
I was born disabled, and in my life have flown with different airlines from many airports around the world without the need of help. As I’m getting older and far less mobile, I now use an electric mobility scooter to get around, which ‘flies’ with me wherever I go. I’ve found that most airlines and airports have been excellent, though I’ve had the odd hiccup!

My complaint is about the cost of parking at UK airports. This is because the car parks that are cheaper – the ones further away from the airport – use buses to transport you to and from the airport. Many of these buses can cope with a manual wheelchair, but cannot cope with a big powered chair or a mobility scooter. Accordingly, I have to park close to the terminals at a considerably higher cost.

Should airports cater more to disabled people like me when it comes to car parking charges?

CWOODWARD
The disabled parking facilities at most UK airports are frankly a national disgrace. In my experience, at European airports, there are generally more disabled parking facilities where a valid UK Blue Badge is usually accepted. The EU also has a parking card for EU citizens with disabilities, which when travelling outside your home country would give you access to a number of parking rights.

DASER
I’ve relied on my electric mobility scooter in recent years. Airlines and airports have been exceptional in accommodating my needs, despite occasional hiccups. However, UK airport parking charges are a sore point. Disabled travellers like me face up to 50% higher costs because cheaper, off-site car parks use bus transfers that can’t handle large powered chairs or scooters. Airports must address this inequity with fairer pricing.

INQUISITIVE
I have full understanding of the needs of disabled people in public services. At an airport, there must be adequate wheelchairs, suitable toilets etc. However, I don’t think public facilities can cater for individual needs and preferences all the time, considering there are many forms of disabilities. Other nearby car parks could be a good option, while there are many other transport alternatives (Uber etc) that could be a better option when travelling from home.

MARTYNSINCLAIR
I occasionally travel with two different people with severe mobility issues, and while UK airports do not necessarily provide a five-star, polished service for them, I have never needed to complain. We always find wheelchairs if needed, and although helpers may not be waiting at kerbside, you can generally find people to help.

In case you are not aware, I believe Blue Badge holders can register for an exemption to the drop-off charge, certainly at London Heathrow via its website.

With regards to mobility scooters, interestingly, international cruise line Cunard now controls the number of mobility scooters on each voyage. Those bringing a powered mobility device must now book an accessible state room or other designated room.

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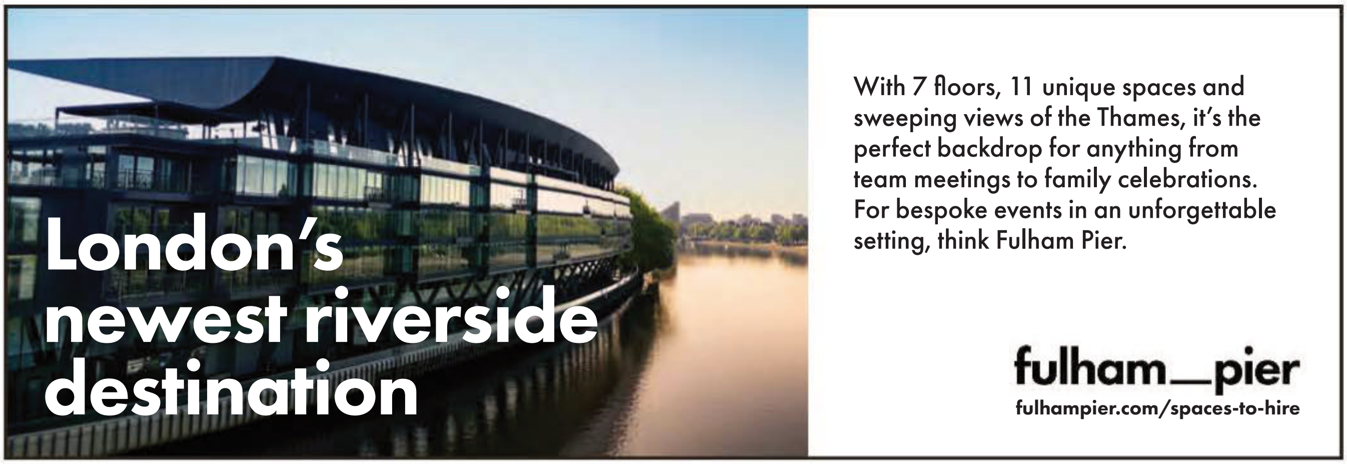
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AIRLINE
Gatwick's second runway

TRAVEL
Stopover programmes

HOTELS
Unusual room service menus

SUSTAINABILITY
Updates from New York Climate Week

Dispatch

The latest business travel updates

HOT TICKET

Johannesburg

The world's most powerful economies converge in South Africa this month

WORDS **TAMSIN COCKS**

JO'BURG TAKES TO the world stage this month as the city becomes the host nation for the 20th edition of the G20 summit – the first time the global forum has been held in Africa.

World leaders will congregate from 22-23 November to tackle a range of socio-economic issues. Priority topics on the agenda range from inclusive economic growth to food security and artificial intelligence.

Continued from previous page

Johannesburg has seen increased uplift from London in recent months, with British Airways doubling capacity on the route by deploying its A380 on both daily services from Heathrow. The fleet change has boosted route capacity by around 30%, with an additional 215 seats per flight. Meanwhile, Virgin Atlantic has updated its winter schedules with a more convenient departure time of 1850 from LHR (rather than 2230), arriving into the city at 0750, ready for a full day of meetings.

And with the opening of the Park Hyatt Johannesburg this summer, the city is primed to welcome world leaders. Set within the vibrant Rosebank district, the five-star property occupies a former colonial mansion with 31 elegant rooms and suites, culinary treats at Room 32 restaurant and a spa sanctuary.

For those with some spare time, there are a few festivals to explore. Head to the Whisky Live Festival in Sandton from 13-15 November to enjoy world-class whiskies and mixology masterclasses, or put on your dancing shoes and head to Keinemusik electronic music festival at Old Park Station from 21-22 November.

DID YOU KNOW? Johannesburg is the wealthiest city in Africa, with 11,700 resident millionaires according to the Africa Wealth Report 2025

TOP: The courtyard at the Park Hyatt Johannesburg **INSET:** Whisky Live Festival

Green light for Gatwick

Gatwick Airport's £2.2 billion plans for a second runway are ready for take-off

THE TRANSPORT SECRETARY Heidi Alexander has approved plans for Gatwick Airport's second runway – a move that would enable around 100,000 extra flights per year and allow up to 80 million passengers in total to travel through the hub annually.

The latest plan involves moving the Northern Runway's centre line 12 metres to the north, meaning it can then be put into routine use (currently, it can only be used as a taxiway when the main runway is unavailable), and some sources claim it could be flight-ready by 2029.

Reactions have been mixed, however. Environmentalists and nearby residents have raised concerns about noise, pollution and increased traffic. In April, the airport agreed to various conditions, including stricter noise limits, an improved noise insulation scheme and a requirement for 54% of passengers to use public transport before the second runway begins operations.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Clive Wratten, CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA)

"Gatwick's second runway is good news, provided the expansion is delivered sustainably and without cost to the public purse... There is a real danger airports could use sustainability targets as a justification for raising drop-off charges and parking fees, which would hit travellers and businesses unfairly."

Ruth Cadbury, chair of the Transport Committee

"A greater share of passengers to visit Gatwick by public transport is welcome and essential. But where is the money coming from for much needed rail improvements to bring passengers in by train? Be it funding from the treasury or a joint venture with investors – the government needs to answer that question."

'Environmentalists and residents have raised concerns about noise, pollution and increased traffic'

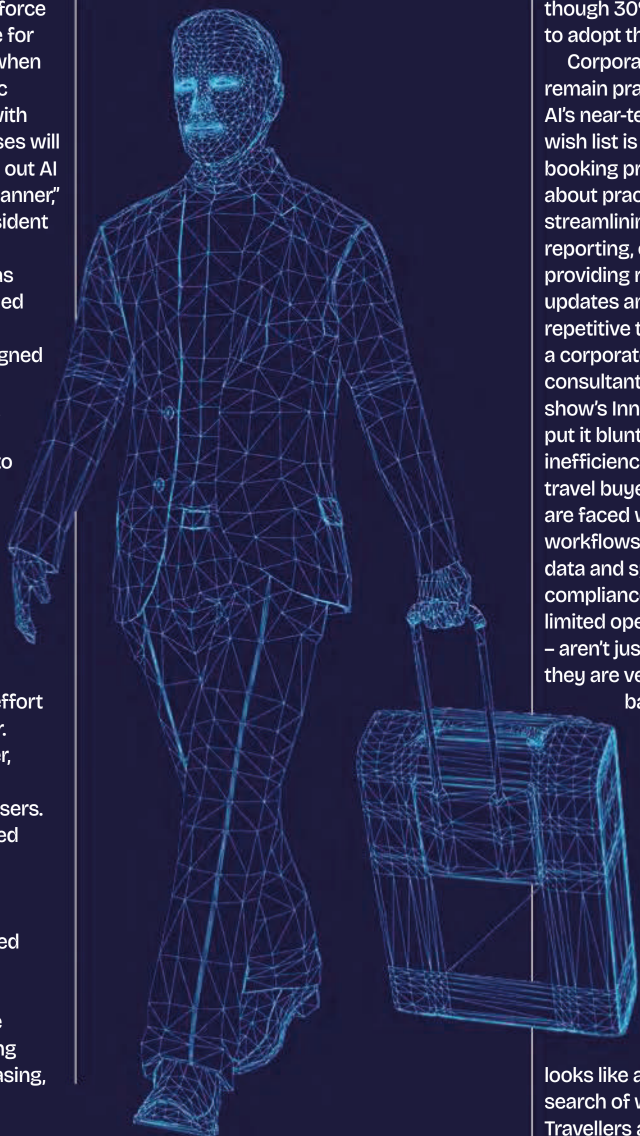
IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK; PARK HYATT JOHANNESBURG; THE WHISKY LIVE FESTIVAL

WORDS
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

TECHNOLOGY

Is business travel ready for AI?

Many say they look forward to it, but hesitation remains



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HAS become the industry's most talked-about tool, with companies racing to introduce booking assistants that promise to streamline the corporate travel experience. Yet despite the fanfare, new research says the business travel community remains cautious – intrigued by AI's potential, but wary of handing over the reins just yet.

SAP Concur's 2024 Global Business Travel Survey, based on 3,750 travellers across 24 markets, highlights this paradox. Nearly nine out of ten respondents said they would be "comfortable" with AI-powered booking tools, provided they were rolled out responsibly. A fifth even described AI-driven travel recommendations as "critical".

And yet, when pressed, those same respondents admitted they weren't ready to use the technology. An identical 89% said they were not comfortable with AI-enabled booking today, underscoring a gap between theoretical acceptance and practical trust. Younger travellers were the most cautious: 95% of Gen Z and millennials voiced discomfort, compared to 83% of Gen X and 68% of baby boomers.

Concerns cluster around data privacy, training and bias. Nearly half of respondents wanted explicit assurances their personal information would be safeguarded, 38% wanted formal instruction on how to use the tools, and 37% needed confidence that the systems would not reinforce bias. "While the appetite for AI is strong, especially when it addresses the specific pain points that come with booking travel, businesses will need to ensure they roll out AI tools in a responsible manner," said Charlie Sultan, president of Concur Travel.

That caution comes as SAP Concur itself unveiled Booking Agent, an AI-powered assistant designed to turn a text or voice prompt – such as "Book me a flight to Miami on Thursday morning" – into an itinerary aligned with company policy. By folding in real-time pricing, compliance rules and expense integration, the company is pitching a future where booking travel requires as little effort as asking a digital butler.

The problem, however, is that the industry is moving faster than its users. A separate poll presented at the Business Travel Show America revealed that only 10% of travel buyers trust AI-generated recommendations for bookings, itineraries or policies. Even fewer use AI-based dynamic pricing insights to guide purchasing, though 30% say they plan to adopt them soon.

> 'While the appetite for AI is strong, businesses will need to ensure they roll out AI tools in a responsible manner'

Corporate travel managers remain pragmatic about AI's near-term role. Their wish list is less about flashy booking prompts and more about practical automation: streamlining expense reporting, optimising budgets, providing real-time disruption updates and eliminating repetitive tasks. Steve Clagg, a corporate travel technology consultant and judge at the show's Innovation Faceoff, put it bluntly: "The core inefficiencies that many travel buyers and managers are faced with – manual workflows, fragmented data and systems, poor compliance oversight and limited operational visibility – aren't just inconveniences, they are very real and present barriers."

Clagg sees promise in AI's ability to reduce manual workloads, but cautions that success "is determined just as much by human input as the data it uses".

For now, the AI-powered booking future looks like an innovation in search of willing adopters. Travellers and managers alike can envision efficiency gains, but mistrust, lack of training and cultural resistance keep adoption limited. The technology may be ready, but the market isn't – at least, not yet.

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Pit-stop ranking

The best and worst cities for a stopover

TRAVEL INSURANCE PROVIDER AllClear has unveiled its Stopover Index, analysing over 80 airport hubs to discover the best cities for a layover. The company based its ranking on factors including travel time to reach the city centre, the cost of a one-night stay in a four-star hotel, the area's walkability, the number of onward flight options, average daily expenses (from meals to public transport) and, finally, the distance between the top three tourist attractions. Each airport was scored out of 100, with Frankfurt coming out on top due to its "compact layout and high volume of onward connections". Doha and Atlanta followed in second and third places, owing to their multitude of routes and gastronomic scenes.

FIRST FOR FRANKFURT The city performed well in the rankings

DID YOU KNOW?

'Skiplagging' is when passengers book connecting flights but miss the second leg on purpose. While it might be cheaper than booking a direct flight, the airline could cancel your return leg as it breaks the ticket's T&Cs.

THE WORLD'S TOP 10 STOPOVER CITIES

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Frankfurt	Germany	78.3
2	Doha	Qatar	75.4
3	Atlanta	United States	74.5
4	Copenhagen	Denmark	74.2
5	Warsaw	Poland	74.2
6	Dublin	Ireland	73.1
7	Vienna	Austria	72.9
8	Baltimore	United States	72.8
9	Amsterdam	Netherlands	72.7
10	Zurich	Switzerland	72.7

US cities made up over half of the bottom ten spots, with Los Angeles ranked the worst due to its lengthy travel time to the city centre, lack of walkability, high expenses and sprawling distances between tourist attractions. Houston, too, ranked poorly due to the higher cost of hotels and expenses.

THE WORLD'S LOWEST-RANKED STOPOVER CITIES

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Los Angeles	United States	21.9
2	Houston	United States	40.6
3	Lima	Peru	42.1
4	San Diego	United States	42.2
5	Mumbai	India	43.8
6	Phoenix	United States	44.7
7	Abu Dhabi	UAE	45.7
8	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	47.0
9	Orlando	United States	47.2
10	Denver	United States	48.3

Turn the page to discover some of the best offers when it comes to airline stopover programmes.

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES**

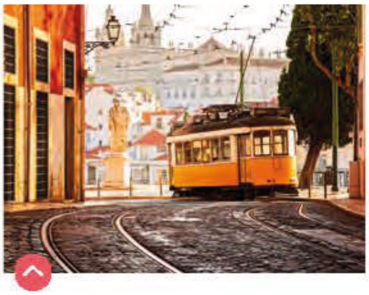
TWO-FOR-ONE DESTINATIONS

More airlines than ever are offering passengers the chance to break up their journey with a free stopover

NO ONE LOOKS forward to a layover. But the days of wandering round the airport killing time and clock-watching are numbered. Certain airlines are now making stopovers a selling point, allowing passengers to discover another destination without paying any extra fare. It's a great way to see a new place for less, break up a long journey into manageable chunks or add a holiday to business travel without forking out for more flights.

With some airlines, it's as simple as ticking a box while booking, while others add free hotel stays or cut-price sightseeing tours. The stays tend to be in the airport's home hub, so a layover might be less appealing if you travel the same route regularly. You'll also need to do the most tedious parts of the flight twice, from security to baggage claim. But if you can spare the time, are keen to see somewhere new and want to squeeze more value out of your flight ticket, these are the airlines to fly with.

WORDS
SIOBHAN GROGAN



TAP AIR PORTUGAL

Best choice of stopovers

TAP Air Portugal is the only airline to offer stopovers in two cities. When booking flights, a pop-up window will give you the option of adding up to ten days in either **Lisbon** or **Porto** for free. This also unlocks discounts of up to 20% at a range of hotels and offers at over 150 partners including restaurants, tours, cultural attractions and shops. It will also get you a 48-hour Porto card for free admission to five museums. Or use your stopover to explore the Algarve, Madeira or the Azores and book other flights within Portugal with a 25% discount.

ICELANDAIR

Best for transatlantic passengers

Pioneers of the stopover programme, Icelandair permits stays of up to seven days in **Iceland** when flying between Europe and various airports across the US. It's easy to add at the time of booking and won't cost any extra. However, accommodation is not included so you will need to pay for hotels and activities. If you're stumped for ideas, the airline's website includes suggestions for 24, 48 or 72-hour itineraries, including whale-watching boat trips, Reykjavík walking tours, visits to geothermal bathing pools and even the best place to grab a hot dog.

> 'It's a great way to see a new place for less or to add a mini-holiday to business travel without forking out for more flights'

EMIRATES

Best bang for your buck

Emirates is generous to those transiting through **Dubai** on long-haul flights. If you're flying in economy or premium economy and the best available connection time is between eight and 26 hours (or six and 26 in business), you can use its Dubai Connect service, which includes a free hotel stay (and coach transfer), certain meals and a visa (if required). Don't panic if you've already booked, as the service can be added up to 24 hours before your flight. Head to the Dubai Connect desk upon arrival and let Emirates take care of everything.

QATAR AIRWAYS

Best luxury city break

Just because you're passing through, doesn't mean you have to stay in an airport hotel. On flights which include a **Doha** layover of between 12 and 96 hours, Qatar allows passengers to extend their stay in the city for free for up to four nights. The deal includes rock-bottom rates at four or five-star hotels, starting at just $14 for one night. You can also opt for hotels with access to Doha Sands Beach while five-star stays at big-name hotels start from a greatly reduced $83. Further discounts are available on excursions such as desert safaris and souq tours.

TURKISH AIRLINES

Best for a free hotel stay

Anyone with a connection of at least 20 hours in **Istanbul** is eligible to nab a free hotel stay with Turkish Airlines. Economy class passengers get one night in a four-star hotel, while business class flyers can stay up to two nights in a five-star hotel for free. It's trickier to arrange than other stopovers and can only be done after the flight is booked – via the airline's website or by email at least 72 hours before the first flight. You will then be emailed the voucher for the hotel. For shorter connections, you can book free city tours including meals.

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES**

CROWN OSETRA
FINEST QUALITY CAVIAR

AT YOUR SERVICE

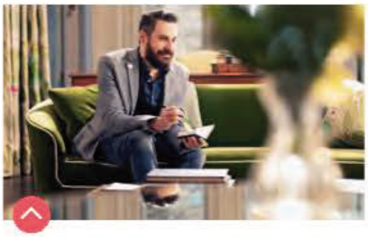
From a caviar hotline to IV drips, room service is reaching quirky new heights

WORDS **TAMARA HINSON**

ROOM SERVICE IS a staple for many business travellers – a quick and comfortable way to dine while finishing off your work at all hours. Thankfully, it's no longer a boring affair characterised by meagre menus and the ubiquitous club sandwich. For example, Rocco Forte Hotels recently launched a musical room service menu, offering guests the chance to book in-room recitals at some of its most famous properties, including a bagpipe masterclass in Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel and a performance by musicians from Berlin State Opera at Hotel de Rome in Berlin. Here we highlight some other hotels ramping up their room service in equally spectacular ways.

Caviar on speed dial

Got a craving for caviar? At New York's Park Lane hotel, there's a hotline dedicated to the lavish stuff. Guests seeking their favourite fishy fix can dial 5 for a selection of Bemka Royal Ossetra caviar, with serving sizes ranging from 30g (£153) to 1kg (£3,426). Accompaniments include blinis, cucumbers, chives and (somewhat bizarrely) chicken nuggets.



Poetry to your door

How's this for a cool job title? Marcas Mac an Tuairneir is the Balmoral Hotel's poet-in-residence (or Bàrd air mhuinntireas, in Gaelic). For £250, guests can book a consultation with Marcas, who will suggest pre-written Gaelic poems or pen a bespoke creation. For £300 expect a poetry recital and an engraving with any silverware purchase from Hamilton & Inches.

Liquid lifeline

Overdone it the night before? If you're staying at the 1 Hotel Mayfair in London then you're in luck – room service offerings include IV drip therapies designed to get you back on your feet in record time. The drips are also popular with guests arriving from red eye flights. There are a range of IV therapies on offer, including ones specifically designed to reduce lethargy and boost vitamin C levels. For a do-it-all approach, try the Myers Cocktail IV drip – a potent blend of magnesium, calcium and B-complex vitamins.

Mixology masterclass

Have you ever dreamed of mixing your own mojitos or serving the perfect Sazerac? London's Milestone Hotel offers an in-room mixology masterclass led by Angelo Lo Greco, famous for his encyclopaedic cocktail knowledge. For £95 per couple, Greco will prepare guests' favourite tipples or create a unique drink after a consultation. Don't fancy a drink but still want a bespoke experience? An artist-in-residence can also paint your portrait.

Guitars on loan

Fancy channelling your inner rock god or goddess? At the nhow Berlin you can browse a Gibson Generation Collection Guitar Room Service menu, which has recently been expanded to include keyboards too. Guests can also use the drum kit and piano in the lobby. Popular with touring musicians, previous clients even include members of the Jackson Five. No pressure then.

Ice cream cart delivery

Those with a sweet tooth will want to try the ice cream cart at the Four Seasons Chicago, a fun offering that has been doing the rounds for 18 years. Loaded with a range of flavours and seven different toppings (we recommend the cookie crumble) it's the perfect sugar fix. For US$30 per person, you can eat as much ice cream as you want – just don't blame us when brain freeze hits.

IMAGES PARK LANE HOTEL; ADOBE STOCK; NHOW BERLIN; CHICAGO FOUR SEASONS; THE MILESTONE

THE PATH TO GREEN SKIES

Sustainable updates from New York Climate Week and beyond

‘Customers monitor actual flight emissions generated by their business trips’

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES

NET ZERO BOTTLENECK

THE MAIN OBSTACLE to the aviation industry’s Net Zero by 2050 goal is the slow roll-out of technology for producing SAF, according to a new study published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in partnership with Worley Consulting.

The study provides “unequivocal evidence” that there is enough potential feedstock from sustainable sources – which meet stringent sustainability criteria and do not cause land-use changes – to meet the projected 500 million tonnes (Mt) of SAF required annually by 2050.

Instead, IATA says that it is the slow pace of technology rollout required to convert such diverse feedstocks into SAF at scale. Currently, the only commercially scaled-up SAF production facilities use HEFA (Hydroprocessed Esters and Fatty Acids) technology, which primarily converts used cooking oil. Alternative, non-commercial technologies, which are necessary to unlock other abundant feedstocks, are not being deployed fast enough.

The industry also faces the challenge of competition from other sectors for the same sustainable biomass feedstocks. IATA argues that policies should prioritise allocating these resources to hard-to-abate sectors like aviation, and urges policymakers and business leaders in the energy sector to invest in and deploy the advanced technologies that are currently holding back production capacity.

FUELLING FUND

BEV founder, Bill Gates

ONEWORLD MEMBER AIRLINES have launched a new investment fund with Breakthrough Energy Venture (BEV), founded by Bill Gates. BEV will act as an investment manager, channelling an initial US$150 million into new fuel technologies. Second-generation biofuels are from non-food biomass sources such as agricultural waste, wood chips and forestry residues, energy crops grown on marginal land and municipal solid waste.

It is also hoped that synthetic e-kerosene can be produced, which involves capturing CO_2 from the air or industrial sources, using renewable electricity to produce hydrogen via electrolysis and then combining the two to create synthetic hydrocarbons – providing low-carbon alternatives to conventional jet fuel.

WORDS
TOM OTLEY

FINAVIA
HELSINKI AIRPORT
JET A-1
NESTE MY
Renewable Jet Fuel
up-to 80

FINNAIR'S SAVVY SAF PROGRAMME

FINNAIR HAS LAUNCHED a new programme to help corporate customers invest in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). The Finnair for Business SAF Service uses a "book-and-claim" model where companies co-fund the purchase of SAF and are able to claim the resulting emissions reduction for their sustainability reporting – even if the fuel is physically used on a different flight or route.

A number of customers have already signed up to the initiative, with companies receiving an audited SAF certificate that can be used to report on Scope 3 emissions.

The service also allows corporate customers to monitor the actual flight emissions generated by their business trips.

Enter Data
Categories
Stationary combustion

Travalyst's
new Data Hub

DATA DIVE

NOT-FOR-PROFIT organisation Travalyst, founded by Prince Harry, has launched a Data Hub to share environmental information with travellers during the booking process.

The initial version provides accommodation data for establishments' environmental footprint across five categories: energy, waste, water, biodiversity and ecosystems, and destination and community. The data is reviewed by an Independent Advisory Group, then distributed by Travalyst's partners – including Booking.com, Expedia and Google – and shared with travellers on these platforms. The hub also ensures the data is standardised, allowing providers to be compared and ranked.

Later versions are set to incorporate biodiversity and social sustainability data, encompassing accommodation, destinations, rail and end-to-end journeys.

CORPORATE CONNECTIONS

THE GLOBAL BUSINESS Travel Association (GBTA) Foundation has launched a new learning and collaboration hub called 'SAF Corporate Connect' to help the business travel industry integrate and accelerate the adoption of SAF.

The initiative is designed to address the knowledge gap among travel managers, procurement teams and sustainability leaders, enabling them to confidently incorporate SAF into their programmes and better advise their clients and travellers.

The hub will provide travel managers with the knowledge and practical tools needed to understand, evaluate and integrate SAF into their company's climate strategies and offers guidance SAF purchasing options – including book-and-claim models.

THE GRAND

AMSTERDAM • 1578

Sofitel Legend The Grand Amsterdam

Luxury in a unique historical ambiance this Festive Season

Sofitel Legend The Grand Amsterdam invites you to embrace the holiday spirit in true five-star luxury and a unique historical ambiance. Furnished with French elegance and grandeur, the hotel transforms into a festive retreat, where heritage and seasonal charm blend seamlessly. From the enchanting halls and the beautifully decorated lobby to the intimate rooms and suites with butler service, The Grand sets the stage for a memorable December.

Step into the historic Council Chamber, transformed into a magical Winter Wonderland, and enjoy a sumptuous buffet of savory delicacies and sweet indulgences, accompanied by a sparkling apéritif. At Bridges, Executive Chef Raoul Meuwese elevates his signature French cuisine with a festive twist, perfectly paired with exquisite wines. For a Mediterranean touch, Oriole Garden Bistro offers a Menu du Chef experience filled with seasonal flavors that remind you of the holiday spirit.

For a more private setting, The Grand offers elegant meeting rooms, creating the perfect setting for celebrations with family, friends, or colleagues. Complete your festive journey by relaxing at Sofitel SPA or simply by soaking up the hotel's enchanting holiday atmosphere.

This December, celebrate at The Grand, where luxury, heritage, and festivities come together in the heart of Amsterdam.

Sofitel Legend The Grand Amsterdam - Oudezijds Voorburgwal 197 - 1012 EX Amsterdam
T +31(0)20 555 31 11 - www.sofitel-legend-thegrand.com

SOFITEL
LEGEND

Explore.

Eat, drink, shop, relax

EXTRA DAY

Dublin

Ireland's historic and culturally rich capital is famously warm – at least in the welcome from friendly locals, if not always the temperature

WORDS **CHRIS DWYER**

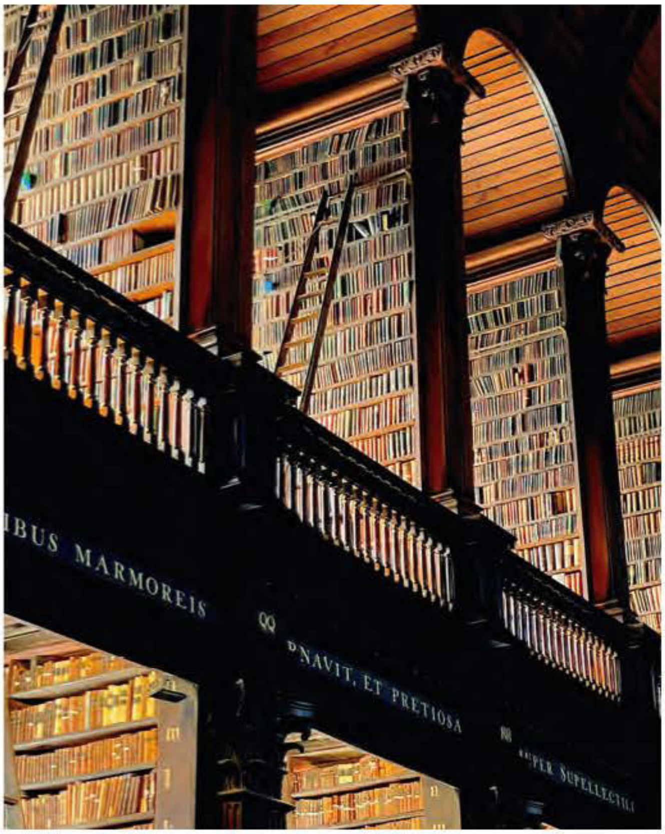
IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES**

Continued from previous page

The Book of Kells
Dublin's dazzling literary history is writ large by giants including James Joyce and Oscar Wilde, but a much older work reflects extraordinary ancient artistry. Right in the heart of the city, Trinity College is Ireland's most prestigious university and its Old Library is home to the Book of Kells, a ninth-century illuminated manuscript featuring intricate calligraphy and illustrations painstakingly created by monks. While you're here, don't miss the Long Room – a jaw-dropping hall decked with marble busts and ancient tomes on floor-to-ceiling wooden shelves. After soaking up all that scholarly history, walk in the footsteps of alumni like Bram Stoker – and aviation giants Michael O'Leary and Willie Walsh.

EPIC knowledge
From Trinity, it's a short, easy stroll along the banks of the River Liffey to EPIC, the brilliant Irish Emigration Museum. Interactive exhibitions recount the captivating tales of more than 300 Irish people through the ages, reliving their greatest tragedies and triumphs. The beauty is that you learn about both historic and modern Ireland. For those with Irish roots, don't miss The Irish Family History Centre, a destination that sets the global standard in genealogy, untangling family trees and appearing in hit BBC show *Who Do You Think You Are?*

Amble around Ballsbridge
Grab a quick lunch and a pint of the black stuff in the affluent Ballsbridge neighbourhood – home to embassies, upscale boutiques, some of Dublin's most beautiful period homes and major concerts and sporting events at Aviva Stadium. Don't miss the Grand Canal area around Baggot Street, which is filled with cafés, bars and restaurants, many of which overlook the tranquil water. Herbert Park offers a relaxing green escape, or walk through Dublin's 'Golden Mile' of swanky shops to spend your hard-earned money.

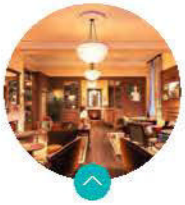


FROM TOP Trinity College; Howth

A coastal walk in Howth
Next up, see a different side to Dublin in the suburb of Howth. A 30-minute DART train ride for a couple of euros takes you to this popular escape spot. Expect stunning coastal walks, charming eateries and artisan markets. Vast skies, salty sea air and a soundtrack of screeching seagulls make for a lovely retreat.

Dine at Chapter One by Mickael Viljanen
If you've only got time for one meal, make sure it's at Ireland's hottest restaurant in picture-perfect Parnell Square. The finest local and international produce is teased to stunning effect by a young culinary team led by chef patron Mickael Viljanen, complete with warm service. Signature dishes include Donegal lobster and foie gras royale, plus extraordinary patisseries. BT

WHERE TO STAY



The Hoxton Dublin
Opening in November, it offers 129 bedrooms as well as lively drinking and dining spots, including the Peruvian-inspired Cantina Valentina, The Library Bar and late-night music venue Groundwork – marking a first for the popular Ennismore brand.

CitizenM Dublin St. Patrick's
Opened in July, this 245-room property is steps from St Patrick's Cathedral in The Liberties neighbourhood. Works by local artists, an enticing open-plan lobby and plenty of foliage are among the standout features.

The Shelbourne
St Stephen's Green hotel The Shelbourne, known as the Grande Dame of Dublin, is undergoing a renovation some 201 years after she first opened her doors. The hotel will remain open throughout the works on 226 of its 265 rooms. Plus, expect a revamp of the spa and communal areas.

IMAGES JM PIQUE/UNSPLASH; ALEJANDRO LUENGO/UNSPLASH; KELVIN GILLMOR

Fairway getaway

Celebrate The 154th Open at Royal Birkdale, with a range of world-class hospitality packages

STEEPED IN MORE THAN 160 YEARS of history and tradition, The Open is golf's original championship. It unites the world's best players with iconic links courses and the most passionate fans in pursuit of the renowned Claret Jug. Next year's showcase is no exception.

PREMIUM OFFERINGS

From 12–19 July 2026, you can become part of the action thanks to a range of unforgettable hospitality choices.

Held in one of the sport's most celebrated venues, Royal Birkdale, The 154th Open has a reputation of excellence to uphold. Thankfully, these experiences are up to the occasion.

Each Hospitality Package includes official Championship admission, whereby guests are invited to soak up the electric atmosphere with behind-the-scenes access to prime viewing locations. Plus, with exceptional cuisine, impeccable service and ultimate comfort, you'll be kept at the heart of the Championship all day.

New for 2026, Destination Packages have been introduced, unveiling a new gold standard in luxury leisure. They too offer Championship tickets alongside premium hotel accommodation, inclusive transport and even curated extras such as tee times and official merchandise. Combining all these elements, Destination Packages are the perfect choice to help streamline your upcoming corporate event.

YOUR IDEAL TRIP

Beyond exclusivity, what makes these packages so desirable is their unbound versatility; they're designed to suit all occasions. From client trips to corporate rewards and even personal celebrations, you can curate the perfect trip to suit your agenda.

FROM TOP: Golf's ultimate championship; prime viewing opportunities at The Open; raising a glass to the occasion

Tailor your time accordingly. Opt for relaxed informal dining or a world-class all-inclusive setup. Feel the atmosphere up close with exclusive excursions or get comfortable afront unparalleled course views. Rooted in comfort, this flexibility means you don't have to worry about catering for or entertaining a party.

Whether you're treating your team's highest performers, welcoming a new client into the fold or simply a lover of luxury leisure, these packages immerse you in the unwavering prestige of The Open.

Explore Hospitality Experiences for The 154th Open
theopen.com/tickets-and-hospitality/2026

H$_2$WHOA!

WHY ARE DINERS PAYING £240 FOR A BOTTLE OF WATER?

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

From Macclesfield to Rome, water menus and H20 sommeliers are bubbling up in the premium segment

IN 2016, DORAN Binder ended up buying a rundown pub in a village south of Macclesfield in the north of England. For a lifelong teetotaller who hated pubs, The Crag Inn was an odd choice, until he discovered its hidden treasure: a borehole 27 metres underground. A meeting with a water engineer later provided an aquatic epiphany:

"He walked through my door, pointed at me and said, 'Do you know your water is amazing? This is the best water I've ever had, by a mile.' That was the day my life changed."

The water source is nearby Shutlingsloe Hill, from where it flows through limestone and sandstone before accumulating in the sub-pub spring. In 2018, he launched Crag Spring Water, which has guaranteed a revenue stream *(ahem)* and earned gold medals from the Fine Water Society – a global forum championing premium water brands.

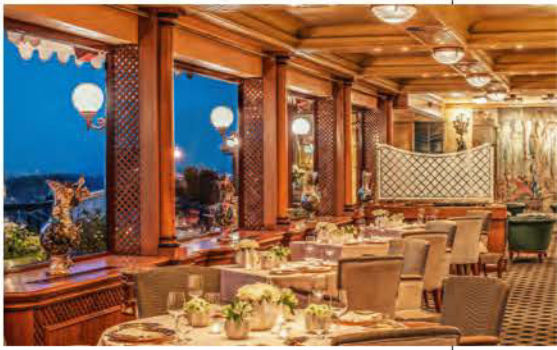
RETHINKING DRINKING

For years, restaurants have paid lavish attention to wine but dismissed water. With diners increasingly seeking out non-alcoholic drinks, however, the water connoisseur calling has come – and with it a rivulet of sommeliers.

"Restaurants throw a wine menu at someone who's teetotal, but if you throw me something I'm interested in, you'll get more value out of me. Water also has benefits that enhance an epicurean experience," Binder says.

To prove his point, he's teamed up with fine dining restaurant La Popote in Cheshire to develop a water menu of seven bottles – from "creamy, silky, smooth like extra-virgin olive oil" Crag Spring (£5 per bottle) to "delicate, salty and effervescent" Vidago from Portugal (£19).

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF O LAR DO LEITON**



'He pointed at me and said, "Do you know your water is amazing?"'

As with wine, the key with water comes in tasting it properly. "TDS, or total dissolved solids, measures the mineral content that defines a water's flavour. Distilled water scores zero, while seawater reaches 30,000-40,000. Magnesium brings a slight bitterness, sodium adds saltiness, and calcium can taste sweet," Binder explains. La Popote offers a 14TDS Lauretana mineral water from Italy and 3,300TDS Vichy Celéstins from France.

"High TDS waters are rich in taste, like gravy, but with food they really come alive." Such waters pair well with unseasoned foods, especially cheese and chocolate. Water should also be served at room temperature. "When we chill water to five degrees, we kill it, there's no taste".

La Popote claims to be the only venue in the UK with a water menu, but a handful of global restaurants are also highlighting H2O.

NO PLACE LIKE ROME

Nowhere curates water more judiciously than La Pergola, a three Michelin-starred restaurant atop Rome's Waldorf Astoria hotel (pictured). Alongside tasting menus by Heinz Beck and a famed wine cellar, it boasts a list of 57 waters with tasting notes and eye-watering prices.

A €20 bottle of Icelandic Glacial is "taken from the Ölfus spring, formed over 5,000 years ago, continuously replenished by a gradual filtration of rainfall and snowmelt over untouched lava fields."

Meanwhile, Fromin from the Czech Republic offers 15,000-year-old glacier water from North Bohemia, which remained sealed underground until it was recently discovered and bottled. "We find not only an extremely pure water, but also a few crystals. These natural gems transmit their vibrations to the water and act on our energy field, raising our positivity and harmony. Their power is inexhaustible."

You'll also require inexhaustible funds to afford the €180 bottle, while a mere €280 grants you a variation enriched with 24-carat gold flakes, encased in a gold-adorned glass bottle. Perhaps that would be an H2No...

RECORD-BREAKING MENU

HEAD TO THE province of Ourense near Spain's border with Portugal, and you'll find a humble traditional Spanish restaurant that claims to host the world's largest water menu. O Lar Do Leitón offers a seriously impressive 33-page menu complete with gastronomic pairings based on "factors such as mineralisation, carbonation and pH levels". Our advice: pick a bottle to enjoy with the restaurant's speciality dish – roast suckling pig.

BACK IN STYLE Sustainable fashion influencer Andrea Cheong runs workshops on mending clothes at Hart Shoreditch Hotel London

A STITCH IN TIME

Decompress on your next work trip with these creative hotel workshops

Helping Westminster Recycle
Longdan
1302503
Recycle

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

TAPPING INTO YOUR creative side is a tried and tested way to unwind – but it's not that easy on a business trip without the right tools to hand. Fortunately, several hotels are expanding their activity programmes to incorporate arts and crafts into the mix – from pottery making to sketching classes. Here are our top picks for those wanting to master the art of relaxation.

HART SHOREDITCH HOTEL LONDON, CURIO COLLECTION BY HILTON

Art is central to the wellness offering at this East End hipster hotel. A programme of workshops allows guests and locals to try their hand at a range of crafts against the backdrop of Hart's rotating exhibitions.

During my stay I joined the Mindful Mending Club – a sewing workshop run by sustainable fashion influencer and author Andrea Cheong, who uses Instagram to offer tutorials on restoring worn-out clothing.

> 'A curated programme of workshops allows guests to try their hand at a range of crafts'

At Hart Shoreditch, attendees are invited to bring a clothing item in need of repair or alteration – be it a holey jumper or trousers to rehem. Newbies and more experienced sewers are equally welcome; Cheong adapts her teachings to guests' (or rather their garments') needs, occasionally bringing a sewing machine for more intensive repairs.

I had opted for a rather feeble button replacement on a much-loved grey woollen cardigan, but was challenged to try embroidery stitches on fabric scraps. Fellow guests had set themselves more ambitious tasks, including repairing holes in delicate, fine-knit jumpers. Whatever the material, we all left suitably relaxed with restored garments in hand and a set of sewing skills up our sleeve. **£7 per person; book via hartshoreditch.com/whats-on. Cheong is also launching a Sip and Stich workshop on 7 November.**

CONRAD TOKYO

At Conrad Tokyo, located in the capital's central Shiodome district, guests can participate in an intricate, ancient Japanese tradition dating back to the 15th century. Kintsugi, which translates to "joined with gold", is a technique to restore broken pottery. An adhesive mixture of urushi lacquer (derived from the sap of a lacquer tree) and precious metallic powders (usually gold, platinum or silver) is used to join the breaks of cracked pottery pieces. The result is an artfully repaired, one-of-a-kind ceramic piece, adorned with shining gold veins. **£445 for two guests; book via the concierge.**

AMAN NEW YORK

Aman has teamed up with camera company Leica to offer photography masterclasses. Guests can learn editorial, portrait or city photography, or join an introduction class to master the basics. Classes are led by New York-based photographers including Mark DePaola and Mark Mann, and can be adapted to suit each guest's interests, while those wanting to snap solo can rent a complimentary camera. **From US$7,000; book via the concierge.**

HOTEL SAVOY, FLORENCE

What better place to pick up a paintbrush than the birthplace of Renaissance art? Rocco Forte's Hotel Savoy is leaning into the city's history, offering painting workshops at a nearby art studio. Guests can create a traditional fresco, landscape painting or still life study, while exploring the foundations of art with local painters – including how to use perspective to create depth, and apply traditional rules of composition to bring balance to the page. **€500 for two guests; book via the concierge.**

IMAGES **COURTESY OF HART SHOREDITCH; CONRAD TOKYO; ROCCO FORTE HOTELS**

THE EXPERIENCE

EXCLUSIVE ENTRY

A taste of creativity through IHG's new Doors Unlocked programme

INSIDER ACCESS TO fashion shows, film screenings, private art studios and dress rehearsals – all alongside high-end dining and premium stays – await IHG One Rewards members, thanks to the group's new Doors Unlocked packages.

The aim is to create emotional connections through activities that cannot be booked elsewhere, rewarding loyalty with memory-making experiences rather than just upgrades.

The programme kicked off in London in September, while October itineraries in New York and Tokyo revolved around the cities' film festivals. Next up is a design-centric programme in Dubai (4-6 November), a spotlight on the Australian Ballet in Sydney (20-22 November) and creative experiences in Phuket related to Thailand Biennale (1-3 December).

The 48-hour packages include two nights' accommodation with breakfast at InterContinental hotels, with prices from US$1,500.

> 'The aim is to create emotional connections through activities that cannot be booked elsewhere'

The London launch unfolded across a weekend in September, with experiences including an invite to Yuhan Wang's Spring/Summer 26 runway show, a special performance by singer-songwriter Grace Carter (pictured right), and a one-night-only dinner by renowned chef Theo Randall. Watch the highlights on Instagram @businesstravelleruk.

INTERCONTINENTAL

THE PRODUCT

Action ready

ADRENALINE JUNKIES CAN now show off their extreme adventures in even sharper detail with the GoPro MAX2, a new gadget that captures content in True 8K 360 resolution. Selfie mode means you can record solo quests without a +1, and the extension pole will be niftily

WORDS
RUAIRI WARD
HANNAH BRANDLER

LEFT: In London, the Doors Unlocked package included a visit to artist Philip Colbert's studio and a performance by singer-songwriter Grace Carter

erased from the shot. The gadget can also withstand rugged conditions, thanks to water-repelling optical glass lenses and a cold-weather Enduro Battery for winter sports. After the trip, use the GoPro Quik app to reframe videos and edit the footage down to the thrilling highlights before posting in various formats on TikTok and YouTube. Just save the bloopers for a separate reel! £449.99; amazon.co.uk

IMAGES **TOM RANDALL/INTERCONTINENTAL; MATT ABÉ**

THE RESTAURANT

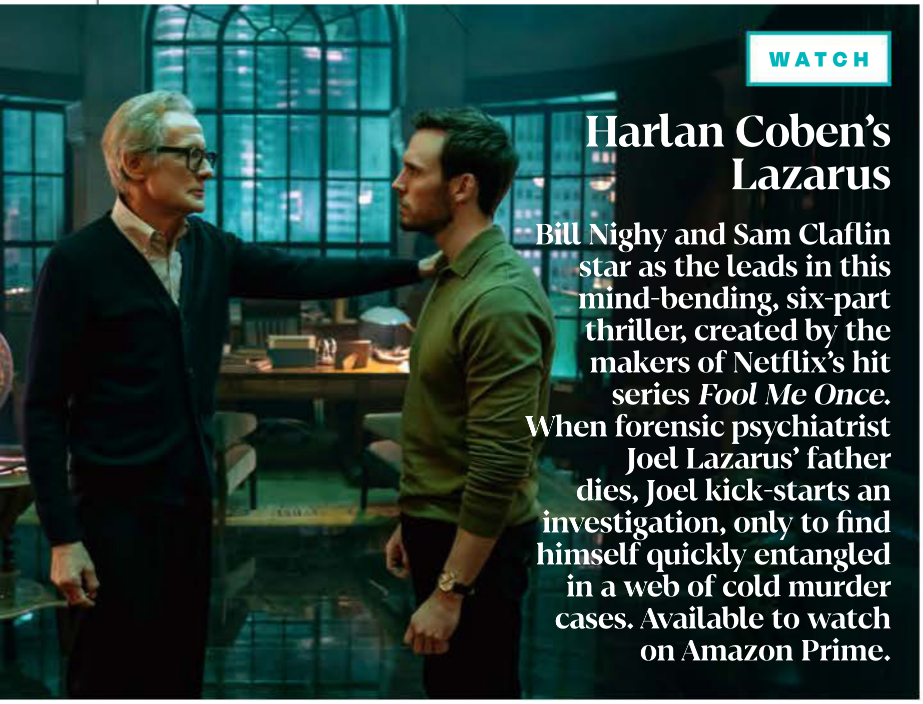
Since the closure of Michel Roux's fine dining institution Le Gavroche last year, there's been big shoes (and stomachs) to fill in Mayfair. Moving into the space on Upper Brook Street this month is Bonheur by Matt Abé – the debut solo venture from the former chef patron of three Michelin-starred Restaurant Gordon Ramsay. Expect all-new interiors by Russell Sage Studio, seasonal produce from the British Isles, and the choice between à la carte, tasting menus or the uber-exclusive six-seat chef's table (charmingly named Petit Bonheur).

GoPro

360 MAX'D

THE NEW
MAX 2

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON



WATCH

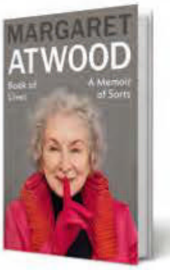
Harlan Coben's Lazarus

Bill Nighy and Sam Claflin star as the leads in this mind-bending, six-part thriller, created by the makers of Netflix's hit series *Fool Me Once.* When forensic psychiatrist Joel Lazarus' father dies, Joel kick-starts an investigation, only to find himself quickly entangled in a web of cold murder cases. Available to watch on Amazon Prime.

READ

Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts
by Margaret Atwood

THE BESTSELLING DYSTOPIAN author is finally putting her own story on the page, offering a behind-the-scenes look at what shaped her award-winning writing. Starting with her nomadic childhood in rural Quebec, she weaves in personal milestones and political moments – including her life in 1980s Berlin, which prompted her to write *The Handmaid's Tale*. The book is available to purchase from 4 November.



LISTEN

12:10
Above & Beyond 2
Above & Beyond

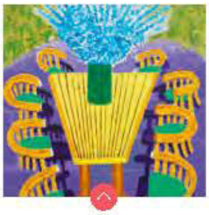
Above & Beyond

LUFTHANSA'S PODCAST IS back for a second season, this time delving into the airline's history ahead of its centenary in 2026, as well as considering the future of aviation. Tune in to hear about 1950s inflight tableware – including the contents of a 1957 breakfast menu – as well as discussions on propeller planes and the progress of hydrogen-powered planes. The first episode even includes a gnarly story about inflight sick bags.

CULTURAL CALENDAR

OUR PICK OF EVENTS TAKING PLACE AROUND THE WORLD

DOMESTIC

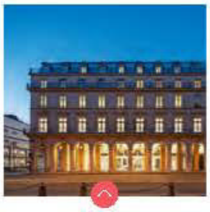


David Hockney Exhibition, London

7 November, 2025 – 28 February, 2026

Annely Juda Fine Art is debuting a series of paintings by acclaimed English artist David Hockney at its new gallery space on Hanover Square. The exhibition will include colourful, dynamic canvases of striking home interiors, as well as Hockney's moon works – paintings of the night sky created at his Normandy studio.

SHORT-HAUL

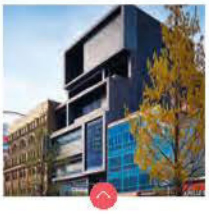


Exposition Générale, Fondation Cartier, Paris

until 23 August, 2026

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is now open in the Palais-Royal district, housed in an impressive Haussmann building designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, right beside the Louvre. To mark the opening, the gallery has launched Exposition Générale, which showcases the breadth of the foundation's 41-year history with nearly 600 works by over 100 artists.

LONG-HAUL



Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

from 15 November

This museum is reopening in a new location, following a seven-year closure. Continuing its mission of supporting artists from African backgrounds and art influenced by Black culture, the museum is having a full-circle moment – opening with work by artist and activist Tom Lloyd, who was the subject of the institution's first exhibition in 1968.

IMAGES BEN BLACKALL/PRIME, © AMAZON CONTENT SERVICES LLC; COURTESY STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM/© DROR BALDINGER FAIA; THE FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN, 2 PLACE DU PALAIS-ROYAL, PARIS. © JEAN NOUVEL / ADAGP, PARIS, 2025. PHOTO © MARTIN ARGYROGLO; © DAVID HOCKNEY

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Hannah Brandler catches up with actor Siân Brooke, star of BBC drama *Blue Lights*

What drew you to acting?
I was a big daydreamer and had a vivid imagination. MGM films were always on at home and that notion of escaping into different worlds really appealed to me. I was also quite shy and I observed life. As I got older, I loved the company of creatives and actors, and did everything to be part of that world – including being part of every theatre group in the Midlands.

What was your first acting job?
I did three years classical training at RADA and my first job was *Dinotopia* – flying pterodactyls in a world where dinosaurs and humans live side by side. It was bonkers!

Can you watch TV like an ordinary audience member?
You can never truly disengage from the job. Knowing what it takes to do certain sequences, there's always an element of 'how did they do that?' or 'that would have taken a long time'. Lots of actors watch documentaries because you don't dissect them in the same way.

Congratulations on *Blue Lights*, which has received critical acclaim. Is there added pressure to return to a character for subsequent series?
I actually find the opposite. It's more nerve-racking when you're creating a show from scratch because you can pick from anything to portray that world. You have a palette of colours and you're desperately trying to fine-tune it to bring the world that the writers crafted so beautifully to life. I enjoy revisiting characters that have been given a seal of approval. Every series we go back to, you plug into these characters that little bit deeper and can flesh them out. There's history you can carry forward.

Did you train with police?
We spent time with former officers learning about their experience within the force and doing firearm training – handling a gun is not something you do every day. We also did a ride-along with police officers in Belfast. It's interesting to see the relationship dynamics and the banter. And my goodness, there are so many abbreviations to learn! Especially when you're acting, driving 60 miles an hour, talking into a walkie-talkie and remembering your lines.

How often do you travel for work?
For *Blue Lights*, I travelled back and forth to Belfast about twice a week for four-and-a-half months. The flight attendants know me quite well, and the airport is like my second home.

What's been a challenging travel experience?
Last year, my husband was working in Australia so we tagged on as a family for an adventure. We went to Sydney, Uluru and then up the coast to Cairns and the Daintree Rainforest – it was amazing. On the way home, we had to fly from Cairns to Singapore but there was only one flight a week. We left four hours to do a 90-minute drive to the airport, but one of the roads had collapsed! We ended up on a 3.5-hour cross-country detour – it became an absolute farce. We got to the airport with minutes to spare, but the plane was delayed!

What are your tips for handling unsociable working hours?
I'm not one for burning the candle at both ends when I'm working. We tend to start at 5.30am, and then I won't get home until 7.30pm. It's just about looking after yourself, making sure you get sleep, exercise and eat well. Sometimes I get dropped off further from where I'm staying so I can run that last leg home – it's good to have that transition and let the day's work wash away.

Which role has required the most extensive research?
The ones where I've played real-life characters because you're honouring someone's life. I've played the mother of Shannon Matthews, the girl who was "kidnapped" in 2008, the ex-chief commissioner in the Stephen Lawrence drama, and campaigner Julie Bailey in a drama about change within the NHS. You watch interviews to pick up on mannerisms and get an essence of who they are.

How do you settle back into reality after a weighty drama?
In order for the performance to not look mechanical, you do let that person sit with you for quite some time. My husband says that when I'm doing those roles, he sees speckles of the other person in me. But I'm good at leaving the role behind when it's done – I don't carry it with me.

IMAGES **DAVID REISS; ALAMY**

LEFT As Grace in BBC drama *Blue Lights*, with on-screen partner Stevie, played by Martin McCann **BELOW** Siân in HBO's *House of The Dragon*

> 'Every series we go back to, you plug into these characters that little bit deeper and flesh them out. There's history you can carry forward'

Do you prefer TV or theatre?
I haven't done as much theatre recently and it's an itch that needs to be scratched. I miss being in the rehearsal room and diving into a world over a longer period. You also have more control over the finished product in that you are in some ways an editor on stage. How you respond to an audience can change nightly. With TV, I love when you only have a certain amount of time left to get that shot – you're suddenly supercharged.

Are you interested in getting behind the camera?
More so now I've entered my forties. I've been in the business for over 20 years and have been reading and dissecting scripts for a long time, so I feel like I know my way around that world. I'm excited to understand that process from a different perspective.

What's been a career highlight?
Collecting the Bafta for *Blue Lights* with all the wonderful people that worked on the show. I will never forget that feeling.

What job would you do if you weren't an actor?
I'd enjoy psychology – figuring people out and observing human life in all its glorious forms.

What's your IFE pick and travel gadget?
On long-haul flights you can forget about the pressures of real life, so I relish plugging in and watching films. I bring a pair of running shoes so I can explore the city and exercise my brain and body.

What's your dream destination?
I'd love to see the palm trees my parents planted on the Cook Islands.

What's coming up next?
The third series of *Blue Lights* is out now on BBC iPlayer. Coming up, I'm in the second series of spy thriller *The Undeclared War* on Channel 4, series five of *Trying* on Apple TV+ and then I'll be filming a second series of *Supacell* for Netflix.

WORDS
GILBERT OTT

POOLING AND FOOLING

Sharing rewards with friends and family can be a great tool – but it's not without its risks

POINTS POOLING CAN be one of the greatest ways to unlock desired rewards more quickly. Akin to joint savings accounts, the practice allows family members, or sometimes even friends, to pool their earned points together into one pot.

For parents, it's a nice little way to siphon off the miles their dependants earned on their dime. For friends or relatives, it can be a great way to help someone achieve a trip goal sooner by padding out their points balance.

Not all loyalty programmes allow points pooling, but the likes of United Airlines Mileage Plus, The British Airways Club and Emirates Skywards, do. Getting started is as simple as sending an email inviting friends or family to join. Restrictions exist and vary by loyalty scheme, and often require sharing a home address.

At The British Airways Club, for example, up to six people can share a household account, provided they share the same physical address. It's worth noting that you can only change the registered household address every six months, so you can't just dip in and out of different pooling accounts.

In practice, this can be a great way for a family to pool together to send someone on a trip. Rather than one person earning 20,000 points in a year, if four people are doing it, then they can achieve 80,000 points in a year – sufficient for a long-haul one-way flight in business, or more than enough for a long-haul return economy journey.

If you're not already participating, now's the time, but there are warnings to heed.

When pooling goes wrong

Why don't all loyalty programmes offer this feature? For many, it's a function of fraud risk. With more people having access to an account, or the "assets" in that account, there's more opportunity for things to go awry.

> 'Know who is in your pool and have trust that points spending will be coordinated'

What if someone goes rogue and spends all the points on themselves without asking? That instantly creates unhappy members, with limited avenues for recourse. It's vital to know who is in your pool and have trust that any spending of points will be respectfully coordinated.

Points pooling also carries additional risk for airlines. For instance, it enables bad actors to more easily use these accounts for the rewards version of money laundering. Yes, that's a thing! Fraudsters are able to send points flying in from numerous duplicate accounts, using dubious earning practices – such as manufactured spending – to pad balances. Manufactured spending is the dark art of spending on rewards products without actually spending – by cycling purchases back into cash – which erodes the idea of loyalty and points being connected. For example, purchasing gift cards with a rewards-earning credit card and then using those funds to pay off the credit card.

DID YOU KNOW?
JetBlue was the first airline to introduce points pooling in October 2013 through its loyalty programme TrueBlue

This also enables an even murkier world of "points brokers" who pretend to sell customers cash tickets at deeply discounted rates, far below any prices found on Google Flights.

In reality, they are booking a points ticket that won't earn any points or status in return, depriving the airline of revenue while creating bad outcomes and dodgy experiences for customers. It's not at all uncommon for these tickets to be flagged at check-in, with the unsuspecting purchaser facing questions they're unable to answer.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is – unless you're getting a "nett" fare from a trusted travel agent.

Protecting your assets

Accordingly, some programmes, including Alaska Airlines' new Atmos Rewards, are taking a more measured approach. Atmos is only turning on the pooling feature for members with the airline's co-branded credit card – the logic being that they'll know plenty about the customer and have more trust in them thanks to this existing relationship.

Ultimately, there's an increasing need for security. It's no mistake that logging into your loyalty account feels like breaking into Fort Knox sometimes. When you frame points as assets that have monetary value of some kind, it certainly makes you more appreciative of the efforts to protect them. We wouldn't want just anyone accessing our savings accounts – and the same applies for loyalty points.

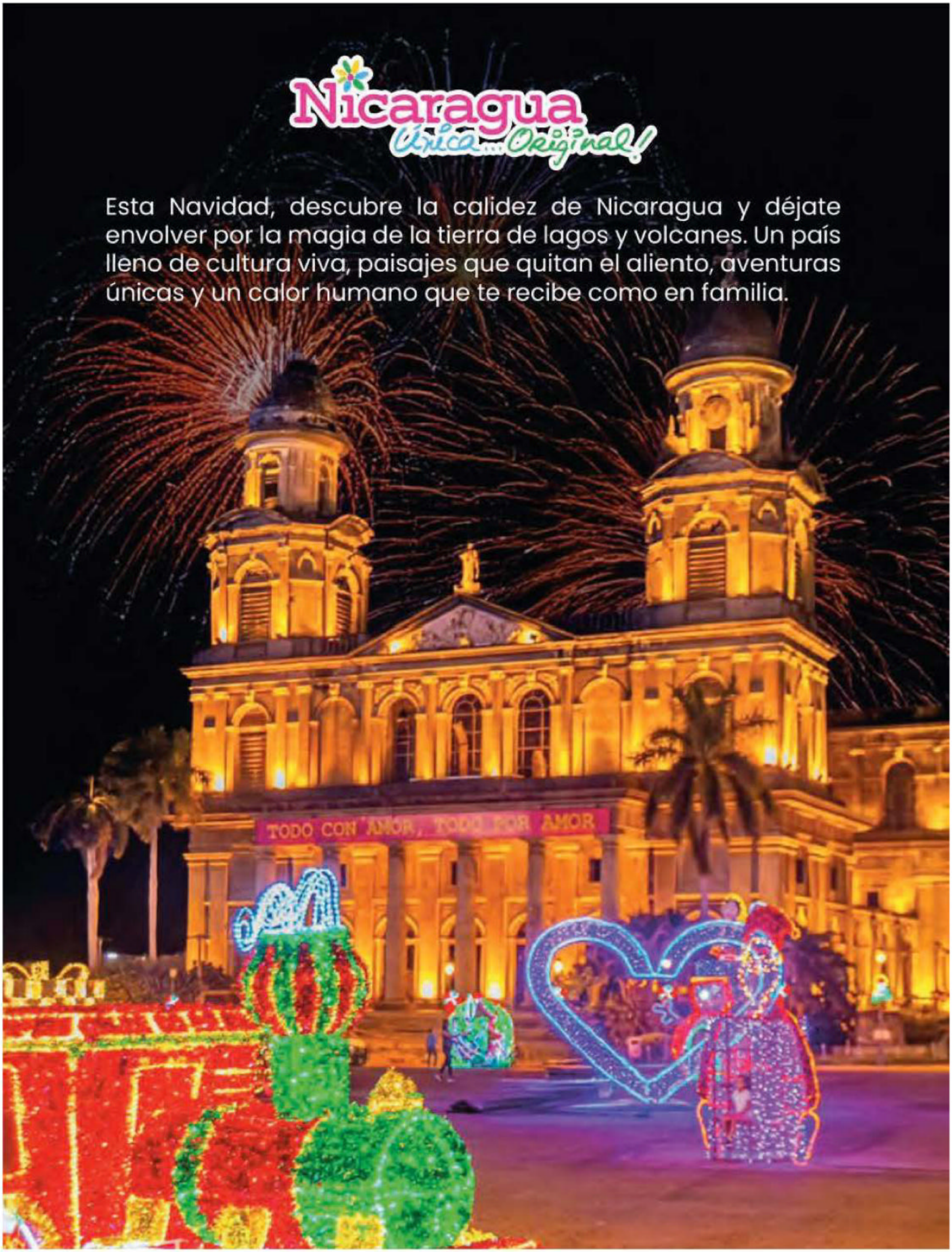
For best practices, it's essential that loyalty accounts have up-to-date contact information and, ideally, that two-factor authentication is set up. This additional step makes it far harder for bad actors to gain access to the account, and ensures that any precious points earned will be yours to spend, or share with a pooling friend.

Gilbert Ott is director of point.me and founder of God Save The Points

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK

Nicaragua
Única... Original!

Esta Navidad, descubre la calidez de Nicaragua y déjate envolver por la magia de la tierra de lagos y volcanes. Un país lleno de cultura viva, paisajes que quitan el aliento, aventuras únicas y un calor humano que te recibe como en familia.



WORDS
BEN WEST

A TOURISM DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN?

Greenland's untapped wilderness is starting to court major international attention – but the country may be trying to run before it can walk

GREENLAND, THE WORLD'S biggest island, has been the focus of unprecedented attention in the last year. Not only has Trump expressed interest in 'acquiring' it, but the country is currently on a mission to expand its mining and agricultural sectors, as well as tourism.

Greenland is currently at the intersection of two major tourism trends: the desire to escape overtourism, and the rise of the 'coolcation'. In November last year, the country opened its new, enlarged main airport in the capital, Nuuk, with a much longer runway so that it can accept bigger planes and direct international flights. Greenland is also planning to open new international airports in Ilulissat and Qaqortoq next year – the three airports will cost a total of US$800 million.

For a country that has a population of just 56,800, this is, of course, transformative. But on a recent visit, I saw firsthand that the government may have bitten off a lot more than it can chew, as the building of hotels and other tourist infrastructure hasn't caught up with the airport expansion.

Home truths

I flew in the same week that United Airlines began direct flights from Newark. Upon arrival, I wondered whether I was going to have to sleep under a table at the airport as the itinerary had already collapsed.

Being in the Arctic region, Greenland has exceptionally changeable weather. Soon after we touched down, thick fog grounded all subsequent flights that day. This meant that there were now many more people on the ground than scheduled.

While waiting for news of my ongoing domestic flight, the airport announced on the public address system that all hotels were full and that stranded passengers should seek out accommodation with friends and family – a difficult prospect if you don't know a soul in the country.

It's also not the kind of place that you can jump in a car and drive to the next town in search of an alternative hotel: Greenland's challenging, mountainous terrain and large, deep fjords make road construction too complicated and expensive. The only inter-settlement travel is via planes, helicopters, ferries and boats.

After some frantic phoning, my group managed to find an unfinished B&B. We were told that a couple of us would have to share a double bed. Since we'd all only met a few hours before, and I'd already had an altercation with one of my colleagues over a reclining seat incident, this wasn't the most attractive of propositions.

> 'The building of hotels hasn't caught up with the airport expansion'

NEW HORIZONS
Locals worry overdevelopment could impact the landscape

Meanwhile, Nuuk's few hotels were lining conference rooms with camp beds to accommodate as many stranded passengers as possible – and I was told the sports hall is also occasionally opened up to increase capacity.

This scenario is not an uncommon occurrence – a colleague of mine visited the month after me and had the exact same experience. Things will invariably get worse as tourist numbers increase.

It's not just the lack of hotels: Air Greenland can't cope with demand either. I was expecting to fly in from Copenhagen on its new Airbus A330-800neo, known for enhanced passenger comforts, including a modern IFE system. Instead, the flight was on a plain old Boeing 737-800, leased from a company called Jettime, and it was akin to Ryanair.

Tarnished territory?

Tensions have also been increasing among the locals: some welcome the increased job opportunities expansion offers, but others fear that the extra wealth generated won't filter fairly down to the population. They worry that one of the few places remaining that's hardly touched by man could be wrecked by overdevelopment, and fret about the detrimental environmental impact on this fragile Arctic environment.

Having said all this, I don't mean to put visitors off. If offered the chance to return, I'd be back there like a shot to experience the stunning landscapes, true wilderness, distinctive cuisine and awe-inspiring activities. But it's a destination where you need to exercise a healthy degree of patience and flexibility – and be prepared for the unexpected.

The tourism and business opportunities are undeniably very appealing – but Greenland has quite a job on its hands to meet its ambitions.

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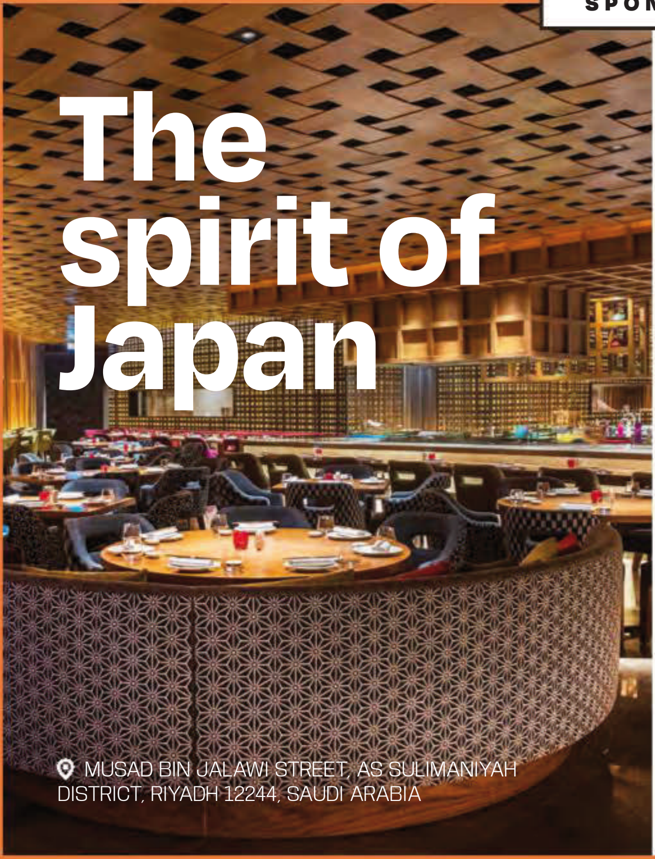

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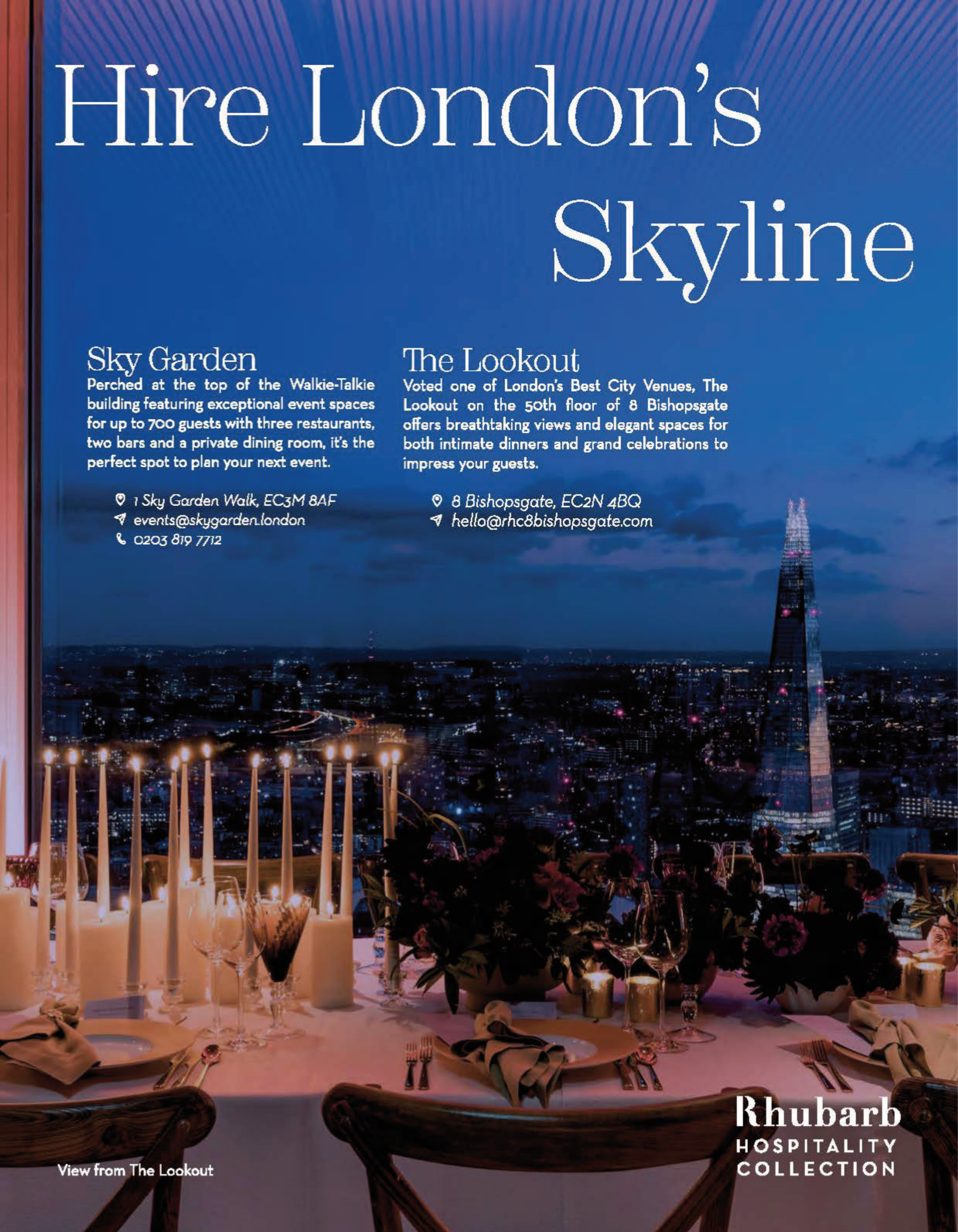

View from The Lookout

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COLLECTION

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BEST PREMIUM ECONOMY
BEST THIRD-PARTY LOUNGE
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2025 BUSINESS TRAVELLER AWARDS

THE YEAR'S BEST AIRLINES, AIRPORTS, HOTELS AND TRAVEL SERVICES

FOR THE FIRST time, the *Business Traveller* Awards honour both the finest regional travel brands in Europe and the very best in the world. This year's approach blends the insight of our passionate, informed readers with the expertise of a panel of leading judges. The response was extraordinary, with more than 95,000 votes cast across five territories. Regional winners are drawn from the public vote alone, while the global categories combine public and panel input to determine the ultimate accolades – a rigorous process ensuring every award reflects both traveller sentiment and industry excellence.

BEST AIRLINE
IN THE WORLD

BEST
BUSINESS
CLASS IN
THE WORLD

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ECONOMY
CLASS IN
THE WORLD

BEST
FREQUENT
FLYER
PROGRAMME
IN THE WORLD

QATAR
A7-ANA
QATAR

QATAR AIRWAYS

The Doha-based airline is voted best in the skies – and on the ground

WORDS **VINAY BHASKARA**

Qatar Airways emerged as this year's standout winner, capturing first place in five of the seven categories for which it was eligible. The carrier even earned indirect distinction through its home base at Doha Hamad International Airport – where it commands an 81% market share – which placed second behind Singapore Changi.

The passenger experience at Hamad is fundamentally shaped by Qatar Airways, whose transiting passengers define much of the airport's standards. Arguably, the only reason Qatar did not sweep the awards outright (bar first class) is its lack of a premium economy product, rendering it ineligible in that category.

A NEAR SWEEP AT THE TOP

For each category, the *Business Traveller* panel awarded a Top 5 ranking, and Qatar Airways was not the only carrier to make multiple appearances. Singapore Airlines, for instance, featured in seven of the eight eligible categories – missing only a lounge award – placing second in five and winning Best First Class while operating from the world's top-ranked airport.

Emirates also appeared in seven of eight categories, while Cathay Pacific featured in five, and both Air New Zealand and Virgin Atlantic appeared in three apiece. Qatar Airways was therefore not alone in demonstrating broad, consistent excellence.

With the highest average rating overall, Qatar Airways' recognition as the World's Best Airline comes as little surprise. Still, it's worth examining whether the accolades are uniformly warranted.

LOUNGES WORTHY OF THE HYPE

When analysed on a category-by-category basis, the defensibility of the awards varies. Take, for instance, the three Al Mourjan lounges at Doha Hamad International Airport. These are truly world-class facilities – spacious, architecturally striking and replete with fine dining, elegant design and first-rate amenities for premium passengers and elite oneworld travellers in transit.

BEST AIRLINE LOUNGE IN THE WORLD

The other winning lounges – Cathay Pacific's at Hong Kong, Virgin Atlantic's at Heathrow, Emirates' at Dubai, and Turkish Airlines' at Istanbul – each present strong cases for recognition (particularly Dubai, which uniquely allows passengers to board flights directly from the lounge). Still, the Al Mourjan lounges are justifiably considered best in class, offering a scale and sense of refinement that few rivals can match.

GOLD STANDARD IN BUSINESS CLASS

Similarly, Qatar's Qsuite Business Class remains a benchmark in the aviation industry. Since its debut in 2017, Qsuite has garnered acclaim as the finest business class product in the world, setting new standards for comfort and privacy. Each suite features sliding doors, lie-flat beds with high-end bedding, premium amenities, and exceptional onboard dining.

While some competitors have since introduced enclosed suites, one defining Qsuite innovation remains unmatched: its convertible centre seats, which can be joined to create a double bed. This allows couples to sleep side by side – a feature otherwise found only in first class on select Singapore Airlines and China Eastern aircraft. For business class, it's unique.

"Being able to fly and fall asleep side by side with my wife was such a special way to kick off and finish our honeymoon together," said Ethan Robinson, a New York-based frequent flyer. "No other business class in the world offered us that."

Seasoned global traveller James He, a two-million-miler with American Airlines, echoed that sentiment, noting that Qatar's premium experience is far more than a seat. "Great food. Great amenities onboard. Dine on demand. Diptyque high-end amenities. Pyjamas," he said. "Qatar even has special immigration clearance for first and business class passengers upon arrival in Doha, plus a separate check-in counter exclusive to them – one that oneworld status members can't access." These small but meaningful touches, he added, "make Qatar's premium cabin feel like it's on an entirely different level."

Al Mourjan lounges set a gold standard worldwide.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The airline's first Airbus A350-1000; Al Mourjan lounge in Doha; signature caviar service in business class

FREQUENT FLYER DEBATES

Qatar's recognition for Best Economy Class is also defensible, though not uncontested. Air New Zealand's innovative Skycouch – allowing passengers to convert a row of three economy seats into a makeshift bed – could arguably elevate its economy product above the rest, just as Qsuites distinguishes Qatar's business class.

If comfort and seat width were prioritised over service and amenities, Japanese carriers such as ANA and Japan Airlines might reclaim top positions thanks to their less dense configurations and wider seats.

Perhaps the most debatable win for Qatar Airways lies in its frequent flyer programme, Privilege Club. By most objective measures – award availability on Qatar and its partners, redemption flexibility, elite benefits, and recognition – it falls short of several non-ranked competitors.

Programmes such as Flying Blue, Aeroplan, AAdvantage and Atmos Rewards arguably outperform it across these metrics, making Privilege Club's placement at the top difficult to justify.

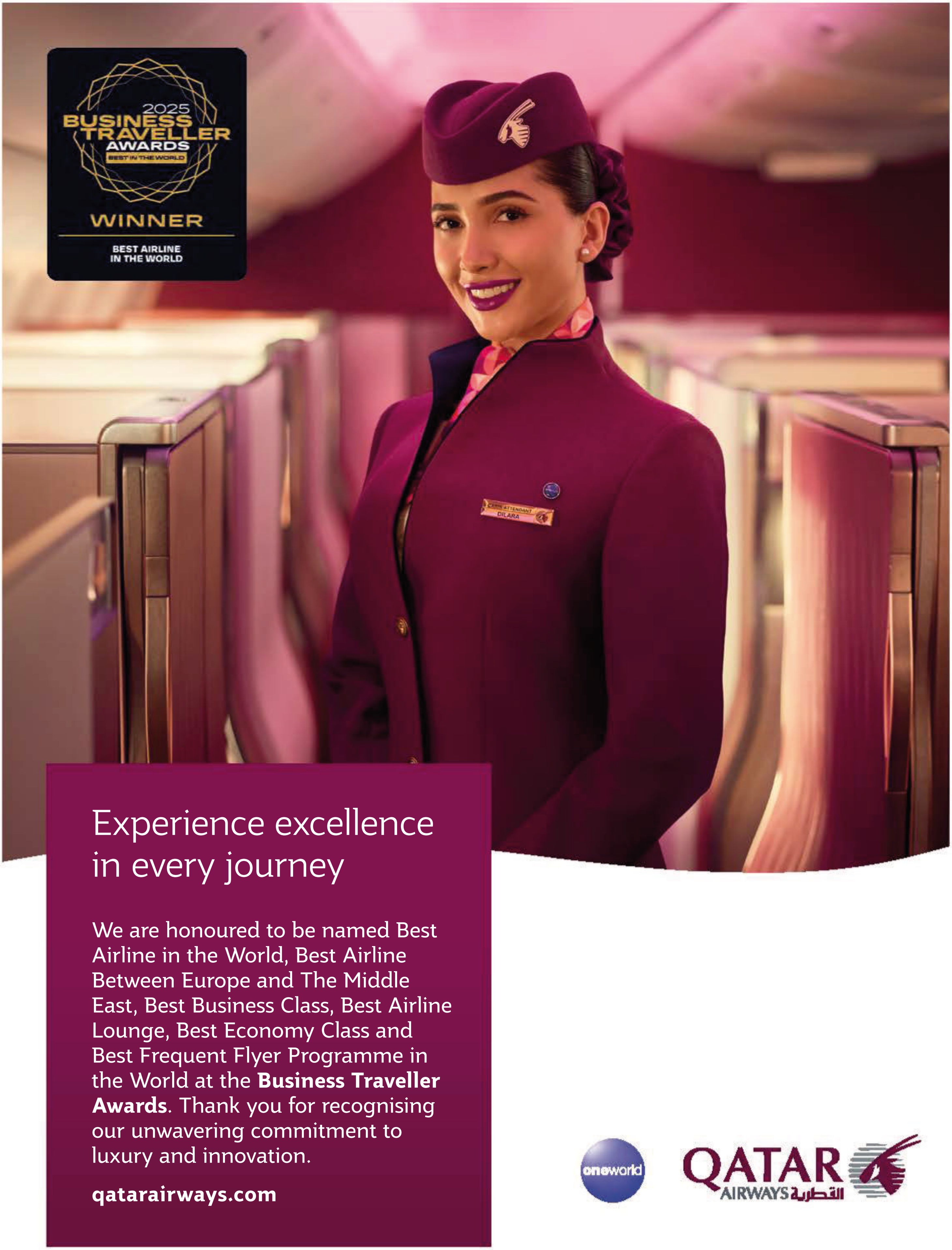
A DESERVING CHAMPION

Even if some individual category results invite debate, Qatar Airways' overall ranking as the World's Best Airline remains well earned.

The carrier consistently delivers a premium experience defined by exceptional service, luxurious lounges and innovative cabin design. In an era when global airlines are pushing boundaries in comfort and service, Qatar Airways continues to set the pace.

→

IMAGES COURTESY OF QATAR AIRLINES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BEST
FIRST CLASS
IN THE
WORLD

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

An exquisite journey in a "hotel room in the sky"

WORDS **RAMSEY QUBEIN**

First class is making a comeback, driven by intense competition and innovation in onboard products and ground experiences. And no airline does it better than Singapore Airlines (SIA), which constantly evolves its offerings to keep pace with the latest passenger trends and expectations. This year's winner of the World's Best First Class has become the gold standard that other airlines strive for when it comes to consistent service. "Thanks to the warmth and attentive service of the world's most awarded cabin crew, SIA remains focused on making our passengers feel a sense of care and comfort whenever they fly with us," says David Lau, SIA's vice president of the Americas.

The carrier backs up its trademark hospitality with an unrivalled cabin, especially the Suites on its Airbus A380s, where passengers can don Lalique loungewear to enjoy in either their swivelling recliner, featuring Poltrona Frau leather, or a separate bed, wrapped in luxury linens, behind closed doors. It's even possible to connect two Suites for a couple. In the bathrooms, flyers find sit-down vanity counters with exclusive beauty products. This true hotel room in the sky is available on flights to cities like Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Paris and Tokyo, among others. "This award affirms our commitment to product innovation, underscored by our forthcoming $852 million retrofit programme to deliver an unparalleled travel experience for our customers," says Mohamed Rafi Mar, SIA's general manager for the United Kingdom.

The airline pioneered the current model of pre-ordering meals for passengers with its Book the Cook service, which offers more than a dozen choices that can be catered onboard. While lobster thermidor and Singapore chicken rice are perennial favourites, the culinary team taps world-renowned chefs to add more top quality dishes. US inflight menus are designed in tandem with Golden Door spa to provide wellness-focused options, while Monica Galetti crafts menus for Suites/First Class and business class on flights from London Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester.

Even the salads served on some flights use nutrition-packed microgreens sourced from indoor vertical farms, often not far from its catering facilities, to assure farm-to-plane-fresh ingredients. The thousands of Champagne bottles served each year on its flights are selected by wine experts who fly to the top French Champagne houses such as Krug or Taittinger for taste tests. There are few other airlines in the world where a first class passenger gets to choose between a glass of Krug or Taittinger (or both) before take-off, always poured at their seat. And it is the only airline in the world to serve Louis Roederer Cristal Champagne in its Suites and First Class cabins. A team of more than 130 Air Sommeliers – flight crew who have spent years taking accredited courses and earning high-level certifications – serve the onboard wine list, both of which are features that few other airlines can match.

At its Changi Airport home base, passengers in the First Class and Private Room lounges can order a glass of Rare by Charles Heidsieck, a cuvée that has only been produced approximately a dozen times in the Champagne brand's history when the growing conditions are absolutely perfect. "Singapore's newer First cabins almost single-handedly redefined expectations around privacy and space in commercial aviation, forcing other brands to elevate their offerings accordingly," says *Business Traveller* Awards judge Gilbert Ott, founder of *God Save the Points*. "The soft touches around food, beverage and exquisite pre-departure experiences make this a journey to relish every time."

FROM ABOVE
First Class Suite onboard the Airbus A380; Poltrona Frau swivelling recliner

It is the only airline to serve Louis Roederer Cristal Champagne.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES/FLASHFILM**

BEST PREMIUM ECONOMY CLASS IN THE WORLD

EMIRATES

WORDS **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

FOR AN AIRLINE known for pushing boundaries in first and business class, winning Best Premium Economy in the World underscores how Emirates has translated its culture of innovation into a cabin designed for travellers looking for a refined experience without the premium price tag.

What makes this cabin so compelling is not a single feature but rather a collection of deliberate choices that together create a surprisingly seamless product.

Consider the seat: it is 19.5 inches wide with a 40-inch pitch and reclines into a cradle position. That's expected in this segment, but Emirates didn't stop at dimensions. It added stitched cream leather upholstery, polished wood cocktail tables and a cabin palette of champagne and wood tones. In short, it feels more like a boutique hotel than a middle-tier airline seat.

This layering of comfort and design signals Emirates' belief that premium economy isn't an "in-between" option. It's a standalone product.

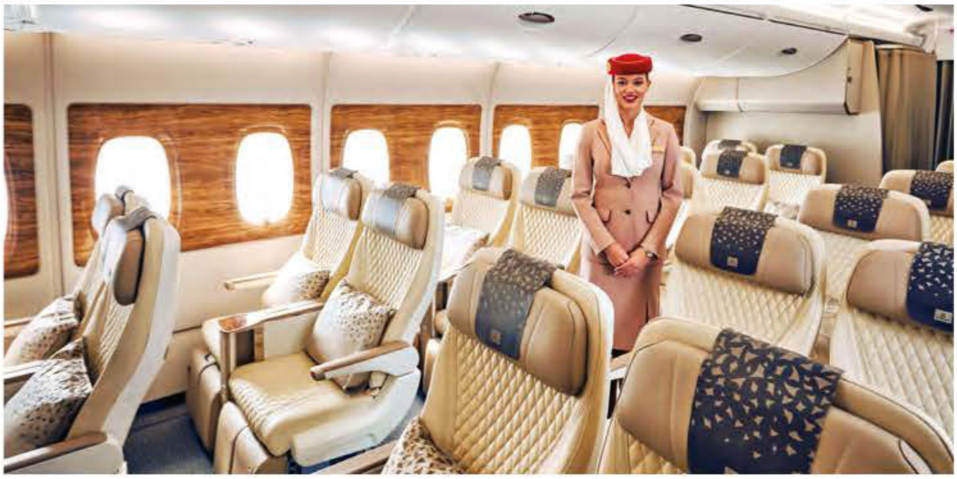
Equally notable is how Emirates has imported elements from its business class playbook. Passengers are greeted with a drink in fine glassware, followed by towel service. Menus rotate monthly and meals are served on Royal Doulton china with stainless-steel cutlery.

Even celebrations have been considered: For US$43, passengers can order a cake-and-Champagne package, complete with Moët & Chandon.

One aspect that rarely comes up in casual comparisons is staffing. Emirates assigns three multilingual cabin attendants dedicated exclusively to premium economy on every flight.

Some of the most unique details come from sustainability efforts. Amenity kits arrive in washable kraft paper pouches printed with soy ink. Socks and eyeshades are made from rPET, a recycled plastic. Blankets are woven from recycled bottles yet designed to feel plush.

Emirates' win reflects the airline's strategy of building a premium economy that isn't a diluted version of business class, but a coherent product of its own. In the words of frequent flyers, it's not simply about "more legroom" – it's about an experience that feels thoughtfully complete.



Premium Economy cabin on the Airbus A380

> Crew attention isn't spread thin, and the product feels curated.

BEST CABIN CREW IN THE WORLD

SAUDIA AIRLINES

WORDS **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

FOR THE second year running, Saudia has claimed the Best Cabin Crew award, a milestone that puts the Saudi national carrier in the spotlight. Chief guest experience officer Rossen Dimitrov said that recent passenger experience initiatives reflect the airline's commitment to rigorous training, blending precision with genuine Saudi warmth and aligning with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 strategy to boost tourism. Yet while awards spotlight progress, they also underscore ongoing challenges: Middle Eastern carriers face fierce regional competition, and consistent operational performance remains a key measure for frequent travellers. This award is an encouraging sign, reflecting ambition and potential, and offering a telling example of how regional carriers leverage awards to shape global perception.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF EMIRATES; SAUDIA AIRLINES**

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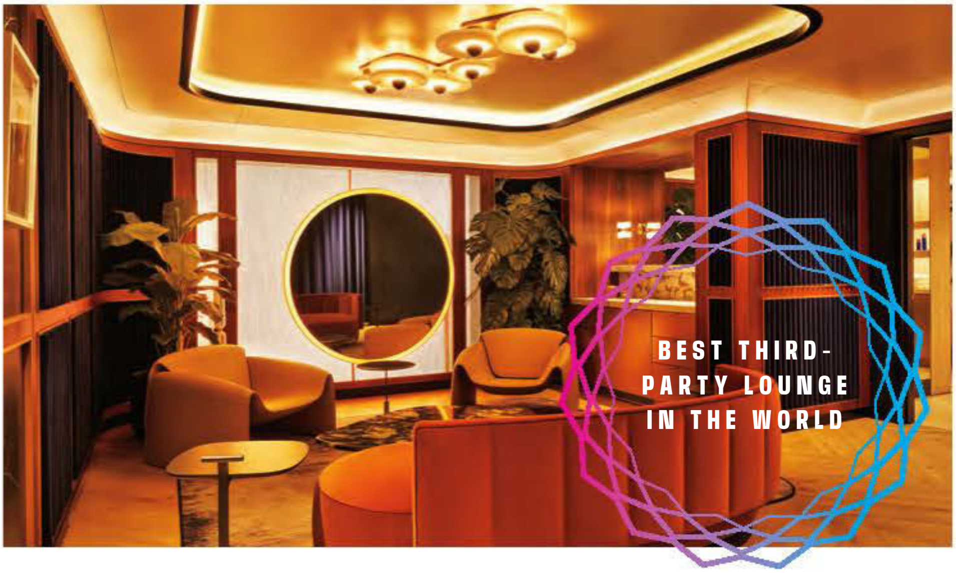

CHASE SAPPHIRE, LAGUARDIA

Offering private suites, arcades and New York cuisine

WORDS **JACLYN TROP**

Upon entering Chase Sapphire's largest lounge, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in a luxury hotel and not at LaGuardia Airport. For its flagship site, Chase Sapphire challenged New York- and Dallas-based design firms ICRAVE and Corgan to create a space that would expand travellers' perceptions and expectations of modern air travel. Open daily from 4.30am until 9.30pm, the lounge is designed as a haven for travellers to relax, work and dine inside bustling Terminal B.

The open floor plan, spanning 2,030 sqm across two levels, evokes a high-end hotel outfitted in clean neutrals, soothing blues and festive pops of red and purple. Modern and spacious, the lounge features art curated by the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection and pumps Chase's signature Sapphire scent to invoke a sense of serenity in harried travellers.

With a dual focus on comfort and convenience, the lounge provides ample power outlets and seating for groups or solo travellers. Visitors can choose from a variety of configurations, with cosy booths, couches and armchairs aplenty.

The lounge also features a digital ordering system that allows travellers to select food and drinks directly from their seat by scanning a QR code. They can even book a complimentary 30-minute facial treatment by Face Haus in the lounge's dedicated wellness area.

Access is complimentary for Chase Sapphire Reserve and J.P. Morgan Reserve cardholders, along with two guests each. Priority Pass holders are granted one free visit per year. Guests or additional visits cost $75. Non-Priority Pass holders pay $100 to enter.

While the lounge maintains a hushed quality, visitors can let loose and blow off steam in the lounge's speakeasy arcade, a vintage-themed game room tucked behind a thick velvet curtain. The room is replete with retro-themed armchairs, a jukebox with a selection of records, shuffleboard table, pinball machine and a photo booth.

FROM ABOVE Reserve Suite; the lounge's arcade

Reserve Suites cost up to $3,000, offering caviar service and private bathrooms.

Travellers looking for privacy can visit the lounge's Reserve Suites, Chase's lounge-within-a-lounge concept. For a fee, Chase Sapphire Reserve cardmembers can access a dedicated suite with exclusive menus and signature caviar service.

Each suite features bespoke artwork, soft velvet furniture and private bathrooms with rainfall showers, plush bathrobes and Augustinus Bader and Oribe products. The two larger suites cost $3,000 for a three-hour period, while a smaller suite costs $2,200.

These are the types of flourishes that Chase hopes will redefine luxury travel. "Through engineering feats to create a double-volume space, this transformation sets a new standard in lounge and airport hospitality," says Chris Gwilliam, senior vice president of global business development at Airport Dimensions, a Plano, Texas-based firm that partnered with Chase Sapphire to design the lounge. With its dynamic energy and bold design, the lounge represents the aim to continually reimagine the airport experience, according to Dana Pouwels, head of airport lounge benefits and strategic partnerships for JPMorgan Chase.

For dining, Chase Sapphire has applied its typical approach, sourcing high-quality local food and drink options. Travellers can enjoy complimentary meals, snacks and beverages such as made-to-order dishes by West Village bistro Joseph Leonard, specialty coffee from Joe Coffee Company, and inventive cocktails at a full-service bar.

Fairfax, another West Village eatery, crafted the dining menu, which includes a variety of meals rotated seasonally.

The 360-degree bar anchoring the lounge, meanwhile, serves an extensive wine list curated by Parcelle and cocktails by Apotheke, a popular bar in New York. The signature Sapphire cocktail is a blend of gin or vodka, blueberry and goldenberry juices, lime, ginger, bee pollen and a mix of spices.

Business Traveller Awards judge Gilbert Ott prizes the lounge's experience, which can range from enjoying caviar with friends in a private suite to consuming a variety of top-notch food and drink at the bar. "For a lounge that anyone can access via a credit card, it's very, very well done."

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BEST AIRPORT
IN THE WORLD

SINGAPORE CHANGI AIRPORT

Beyond its renowned attractions and design, this hub continues to innovate and improve the passenger experience

WORDS **RAMSEY QUBEIN**

It's no surprise that Singapore Changi continues to defend the title for World's Best Airport yet again. The Southeast Asian hub is well-known for its easy transit experience, the lush Jewel complex and pristine ambiance. Never resting on its laurels though, it is transforming into an airport of the future as it installs passenger-friendly and tech upgrades while breaking ground on a new Terminal 5 this year (set to open in the 2030s).

These days, it takes approximately 10 seconds to clear departure immigration (60% faster than before), thanks to its passport-less biometric clearance system designed for both Singaporeans and foreign visitors. By using facial and iris scans to speed up the process, travellers have time to shop, relax or enjoy lounges at all four of its terminals. And that's just what Singapore-based Aaron Wong loves about the airport. "It's probably the only airport in the world where you can disembark from an aircraft and be in a taxi within 15 minutes (my personal best is around 13 minutes)," he says.

Wong, who founded travel blog *The MileLion*, also notes that while Star Alliance member Singapore Airlines is based there, Changi has a wide array of fantastic lounges. If you have enough time and access, he says, you can create your own "lounge-hopping safari", visiting several for a progressive dinner while exploring the airport.

But that's not all. More than SGD 2 billion is being invested to upgrade the airport and enhance everything from its baggage and check-in systems to Skytrain connections between terminals. This includes a rooftop baggage conveyance system that will add another way to move bags between terminals, relieving pressure on the existing belts. With Asia-Pacific travel demand estimated to grow significantly over the next few decades, Singapore is preparing its facilities to handle next-generation aircraft not yet in use today.

There are even new custom-made ceiling robots nimble enough to crawl into small nooks and crannies to inspect and photograph potential problems, like leaks or electrical issues, which humans might not be able to easily access. The smallest device is the size of a banana. This technology has saved the airport countless hours of man power and expense and is becoming a poster child for the use of operational AI that other airports can follow.

That's not to mention the team of smiley-faced robots that clean the terminals day and night. There's also Changi Airport's new AI-driven Aircraft 360 concept. It monitors potential flight delays and uses real-time, predictive analysis to improve how the airport assigns gates for faster turnaround times. It also makes better use of staffing (such as ground handlers and caterers), boosting efficiency and minimising further delays to avoid any domino effect for later flights.

Changi has proven that it is a symbol of innovation in the aviation world while also becoming a source of national pride for locals.

FROM LEFT The world-famous Jewel and its iconic waterfall; Dreamscape, in Terminal 2, features 20,000 plants representing more than 100 species; *Steel in Bloom* sculpture in Terminal 4

It takes approximately 10 seconds to clear departure immigration.

IMAGES **PANG YUHAO/UNSPLASH, CHANGI AIRPORT GROUP**

BEST LUXURY HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

FOUR SEASONS HOTELS AND RESORTS

From Japan to Spain, business executives prefer this sophisticated brand

WORDS **MELINDA SHECKELLS**

After a long day of business travel – airports, time zones, endless emails, video calls, meetings and circle backs – there's no greater comfort than arriving at the check-in desk and, within a few flawless minutes, flipping on the lights in your suite. The experience is familiar, luxurious, quiet and intentional – everything a busy person craves.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts stands at the pinnacle of sophisticated, intelligent hospitality, embodying the very buzzwords executives toss around within their own organisations.

The brand is a true North Star, anchored by purpose-driven leadership and an uncanny ability to attract top talent. It crafts hyper-personalised experiences and delivers a frictionless journey at every touchpoint, redefining its mission every day through a relentless focus on the guest.

Named to honour the brand philosophy set forth by founder Isadore Sharp, which provides high-quality hotel experiences regardless of the time of year, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has expanded to five continents with 133 properties. Through this global footprint, the brand meets its customers where they need to be, every step of the way.

Here, we round up some favourite Four Seasons hotels around the world and the times of year when they are best for business travel.

SPRING

Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Otemachi

APRIL IS A busy time in Japan, as it coincides with the peak of cherry blossom season. Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Otemachi is the city's top choice for business travellers, offering an experience that feels like another world. Otemachi features a gourmet dining terrace as well as 190 guest rooms. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide a hypnotic look at the skyline: even if you're busy with work, it's easy to feel like you're exploring the city.

SUMMER

Four Seasons Hotel Toronto

ANCHORING THE YORKVILLE neighbourhood, this flagship property sets the tone for how executives navigate the world: efficient, elegant and purpose-driven. Check-in happens in a heartbeat. Plush bedding aids recovery. It's a delight to have breakfasts, lunches and dinners at Café Boulud. Add in Four Seasons' intuitive service, and you have the rare business hotel that's as productive as it is restorative.

Four Seasons is the pinnacle of intelligent hospitality.

AUTUMN

Four Seasons Hotel Madrid

COMBINING THE OLD world with the new, Four Seasons Hotel Madrid is situated within seven impeccably restored baroque landmark buildings. The location itself exudes both financial pulse and cultural energy. To decompress after a hectic workday, executives flock to the four-storey wellness centre, host business dinners at chef Dani García's signature restaurant, and close deals over dry martinis at Isa cocktail bar.

WINTER

Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort

ESCAPE TO THE Hawaiian island of Lanai at the exclusive enclave Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort. Don't consider it a reset – think of it as a new way of life. The resort's five-night Rest and Reset programme, which uses biometric data to create an actionable plan, is a dream for anyone who struggles with sleep. Created with executives in mind, the programme offers meditation classes and dining by Nobu.

IMAGES COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS; ROBB AARON GORDON

BEST UPSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

ANDAZ HOTELS

WORDS **LARK GOULD**

ANDAZ HOTELS REIGNS supreme as the Best Upscale Hotel Brand in the World – not because it shouts luxury, but because it hums it. The brand's 30 boutique-style properties in 18 countries blur the line between elegance and ease. Each hotel channels a spirit of place, from the art-lined corridors of West Hollywood to the ocean-brushed edges of Papagayo.

Its newest global campaign, Be Like No One's Watching, captures that spirit: travel without pretence, personal style at the helm, as its Hindi moniker conveys. Guests are immersed in living galleries of local culture, where the lobby might double as a studio space, and a cocktail hails from a neighbourhood poet. "Our luxury and lifestyle brands' expansion in new and key markets is driven by our desire to offer travellers more opportunities to explore the unique communities our hotels are a part of," says Crystal Vinisse Thomas, global brand leader for Hyatt's luxury and lifestyle brands.

The Andaz secret revolves around a delicate balance: global yet grounded, luxurious yet personal. From Lisbon to Shanghai to Miami Beach, Andaz proves that upscale hospitality does not have to be staged. It just has to feel real.

ANdAZ
SINGAPORE

The facade of Andaz Singapore

> Guests are immersed in living galleries of local culture.

BEST BUDGET HOTEL BRAND IN THE WORLD

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

WORDS **LARK GOULD**

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT takes this year's title for Best Budget Hotel Brand in the World – a victory for smart value on a global scale. With a massive footprint of more than 1,300 hotels in 60 countries, Courtyard delivers a reliably modern experience, from redesigned lobbies with media pods and Bistro bars to guest rooms engineered for productivity.

The brand proves "budget" no longer means a compromise. Rather, it means a savvy premium for travellers everywhere, whether in Mecca (where the world's largest Courtyard opens next year) or Montana. And "reliable" does not mean boring.

COURTYARD
BY MARRIOTT

The brand is in the midst of an evolution, shedding no-frills for smart-casual. Think: urban-inspired rest and workspaces, cosy firepits and The Bistro for a proper meal and martini. "As the pioneer among select service brands, Courtyard continues to adapt to the changing ways that guests live, work and play," says Diana Plazas-Trowbridge, Marriott's chief lodging product officer for North America.

Courtyard was literally designed through its core audience in 1983. Rooms are intelligently crafted with plush bedding, flexible workspaces, large swivel TVs – delivering the essentials, with a touch of style.

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK**

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2025
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BEST IN THE WORLD

WINNER

BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY
IN THE WORLD

BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY IN THE WORLD

AVIS

WORDS **JEREMY TAYLOR**

AVIS OPERATES APPROXIMATELY 5,500 locations in 170 countries – so what iconic road trip would you choose to experience in an Avis car? An ideal choice might be Route 66, one of America's first continuous stretches of highway, which celebrates its centennial next year. The “Mother Road” served as a path for those who migrated to the West and today attracts adventurous drivers.

Stretching some 2,448 miles to Santa Monica, your Route 66 journey starts at one of ten Avis locations in Chicago. Ponder over a selection of the latest models, ranging from a full-size SUV such as the Ford Expedition to a budget-friendly Kia Rio and an all-American Jeep Wrangler.

Avis offers all-electric cars, too, but whatever you choose, be sure that you're covered on your epic journey to California. The company offers a range of insurance options, plus the reassurance of 24/7 roadside assistance.

Route 66 is a magnificent drive that offers an insight into the soul of America. Avis allows drivers to experience this journey in true comfort.

Stretching some 2,448 miles to Santa Monica, your Route 66 journey starts in Chicago.

BEST LUGGAGE BRAND IN THE WORLD

SAMSONITE

WORDS **LAURIE BROOKINS**

SAMSONITE IS CELEBRATING its 115th anniversary this year, having been founded in 1910 by luggage salesman Jesse Shwayder in Denver as a trunk manufacturer. Did you know that Samsonite's name was derived from the biblical character Samson to epitomise the strength of its suitcases? Fast-forward to 2025, and the brand is still emphasising strength while embracing elements essential to today's travellers.

In September Samsonite launched Paralux, a seven-piece collection crafted primarily of sustainable materials with features that optimise packing. “This launch represents the best of Samsonite: pioneering design, sustainable innovation and a deep understanding of how people move through the world,” says Kyle Gendreau, CEO of Samsonite.

Rimowa were the runners-up in the luggage category, which shouldn't surprise any frequent traveller. Like Samsonite, the brand puts an emphasis on durability and has long been a traveller favourite thanks to the iconic look of its aluminium cases. The latest debut, Groove, is a collection of tech and lifestyle accessories that takes its cue from the brand's signature motif.

In third place was Tumi, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year with a collection of gold cases in its 19 Degree collection, which promptly sold out.

Samsonite Paralux Large Spinner in stone grey

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK; SAMSONITE**

BEST HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAMME IN THE WORLD

MARRIOTT BONVOY

WORDS **JAKE JONES**

WITH OVER 9,000 properties and 1.7 million rooms worldwide, Marriott Bonvoy boasts the largest global footprint among hotel groups, offering travellers extensive lodging options across 36 brands, including The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis and JW Marriott. What can you do with 150,000 points? Quite a lot, actually. One of the programme's standout features is the Stay for 5, Pay for 4 perk, granting a fifth night free when redeeming points. This makes aspirational stays more attainable, such as five nights at The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur (148,000 points) or Jakarta (120,000 points). In South America, the JW Marriott Quito (120,000 points) and The Westin Lima (136,000 points) offer exceptional value for extended stays in vibrant, culture-rich cities. Earning elite status is also straightforward: Marriott Bonvoy Titanium Elite requires just 35-45 qualifying nights per year with the right co-branded credit cards. Benefits include a 75% points bonus, lounge access, complimentary breakfast at select brands, and automatic United Premier Silver and Hertz Five Star status.

Marriott's strength lies in its unmatched reach and range – but does Bonvoy truly deserve the top spot? Many argue that World of Hyatt remains the smarter programme. Its fixed redemption chart consistently delivers better value, with five-star properties like the Park Hyatt St. Kitts costing as little as 100,000 points for four nights – less than a single night at many Bonvoy resorts. Hyatt's Globalist status also outshines Titanium Elite with perks such as free suite upgrades, waived resort fees and the ability to share status through its Guest of Honor feature.

ELITE MEMBER
MARRIOTT BONVOY
HELLO AGAIN
ELITE

> One of the programme's standout features is the Stay for 5, Pay for 4 perk.

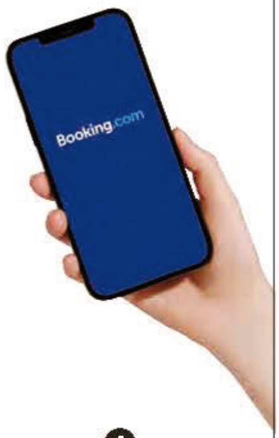
BEST TRAVEL APP IN THE WORLD

BOOKING.COM

WORDS **CALUM MCSWIGGAN**

Six reasons to use Booking.com

As a full-time travel writer and creator, I'm always on the road and I've racked up over 100 bookings through Booking.com this year alone. Here are six reasons why it's my go-to travel provider, and tips on how I get the most out of its award-winning app.



1
GENIUS LOYALTY

Booking.com's loyalty programme, Genius, offers perks like free breakfast, free upgrades and up to 20% off selected stays. It doesn't require a huge financial commitment, either, as it's based on number of bookings rather than spend. You can start receiving discounts from the moment you join the programme.

2
EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

Unlike many other apps, with Booking.com you can book everything from hotels and flights to attractions, taxis and rental cars in one easy interface – which means no more searching your emails for several different bookings.

3
OFFLINE ACCESS

You can access all your bookings within the app without being connected to the internet – perfect for checking your itinerary mid-flight, or preparing for immigration questions about your accommodation before you've sorted a local SIM.

4
TRAVEL PROUD

Booking.com offers free LGBT+ inclusivity training to accommodation providers around the world. With over 100,000 properties now enrolled in the programme, you can see which properties are proud to welcome LGBT+ guests by looking for the rainbow suitcase within the app.

5
REAL-TIME NOTIFICATIONS

Instant alerts about any changes or disruptions to your itinerary will come straight through to your phone. You can also enable dynamic pricing alerts to be notified when prices drop for your desired accommodation or flights.

6
BEST PRICING WORLDWIDE

With over six million properties across more than 200 different countries, it offers a best-price guarantee and will match the difference if you find a better price. It often offers additional discounts for accommodations booked on mobile, too.

IMAGES **ALAMY; ADOBE STOCK**

Canopy by Hilton Cannes
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BEST HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAMME IN EUROPE
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BEST SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

THE DATAI LANGKAWI

WORDS **TOM OTLEY**

NESTLED IN A lush rainforest, The Datai Langkawi has always been close to nature, and in 2020 the resort ramped up its environmental stewardship with The Datai Pledge. Designed to both protect Langkawi Island's unique ecosystems and support its local communities, it's a "promise to maintain a deep commitment to our rainforest, our ocean, our wildlife and our people". Over the past five years, the resort has made remarkable progress in both aims, and demonstrated that luxury and sustainability are compatible and inseparable.

Human impact

As part of the Pledge, The Datai partnered with local enterprises The Kanshalife Project and Suri Lifestyle. Both initiatives support community members by creating meaningful employment in the form of transforming hotel waste materials such as linens, towels and slippers into new products like stools, cushions and artisan crafts. In 2024, 10,862 upcycled candles were created – a 111% increase from the previous year.

On the education front, the resort's upcycling hub, The Lab, hosted 1,376 guests in sustainability workshops in 2024, where visitors participated in candle-making, soap-making and craft activities with local artisans. The facility also collected 18,528 pounds of waste through beach clean-ups.

> 'Luxury and sustainability are compatible'

Tangible results

The Datai publishes Annual Impact Reports, which provide detailed, data-rich documentation of achievements to inspire other hospitality businesses. To take just one example, in its aim of achieving zero waste to landfill, The Datai achieved 96% solid waste processing.

MEET OUR 2025 JUDGES

Their opinions, combined with reader votes, determined the global award winners

JENNY SOUTHAN
Founder and CEO, Globetrender

RHYS JONES
Aviation Editor, *Head for Points*

MICHAEL KEATING
CEO, Ink Global

JESSICA NABONGO
Author, Explorer and Cultural Ambassador

TAMSIN COCKS
Editor, *Business Traveller*

MARK C. O'FLAHERTY
Design and Travel Writer and Photographer

JONNY CLARK
Managing Director, Ink Studio

KATHARINA HESEDENZ
Writer and Former Editor, *Vogue* Germany

ERIC NEWILL
Editor-in-Chief, *Business Traveler US*

KEE FOONG
Travel, Food and Lifestyle Writer

TOM OTLEY
Sustainability Consultant and Director

HANNAH BRANDLER
Deputy Editor, *Business Traveller*

GILBERT OTT
Director of Partnerships, *Point.me*

DAN GARDNER
Co-Founder, Code and Theory

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Managing Editor, *Business Traveler US*

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Executive Editor, *Forbes Travel Guide*

ENRIQUE PERRELLA
Aviation Director, *Business Traveler US*

VIVIENNE TANG
Founder, *Destination Deluxe*

ALEX PRESTON
Aviation Journalist

IMAGES **DATAI HOTELS**

SPONSORED CONTENT

Best of both

Amenity Resorts, Czechia offers world-class hospitality for business and leisure travellers

IN THE HEART OF EUROPE LIES A collection of places where business meets pleasure. Amenity Resorts, a Czech-owned chain of premium resorts and retreats, is redefining corporate and leisure travel for those who seek authenticity, comfort and a touch of adventure.

Whether you're hosting a team strategy meeting surrounded by mountain views in Špindlerův Mlýn, finding some balance in the peaceful Orlické Mountains, sailing across Lake Lipno or visiting exquisite wine cellars in South Moravia, each destination brings a different flavour of hospitality. And now, the latest jewel – Amenity Česká Kanada – offers a serene fusion of golf, wellness and nature in one of the country's most unspoiled landscapes – perfect for enhanced team bonding.

Whether you're planning a corporate retreat, a romantic escape or a family adventure, you can expect farm-to-table dining with delicious ingredients sourced from Amenity's own farms and lakes, paired with local wines.

Just a short flight from London, Amenity Resorts offers the perfect European getaway – one that's easy to reach and hard to forget. Here, meetings and holidays turn into long-lasting memories, and every stay is an immersive story waiting to be told.

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LUFTHANSA *SOARS* TO VICTORY

The German flag carrier wins big in the European Regional Awards

WORDS **DOMINIC KEITH**

BEST EUROPEAN AIRLINE

BEST EUROPEAN AIRLINE BUSINESS CLASS

BEST FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAMME IN EUROPE

Lufthansa has been bestowed with a trio of dazzling trophies by *Business Traveller* readers, including the coveted **Best European Airline** award.

The German flag carrier continues to make great strides in expanding its network and growing its industry partnerships, while its recently-revamped Miles & More frequent flyer programme surprised members with cheaper flight award redemptions.

Lufthansa certainly has a loyal customer base (our readers included) who embrace the airline for being a little different – perhaps even eccentric – compared to other large flag carriers.

Case in point: Lufthansa remains the only major carrier to still operate a large Boeing 747 'Jumbo Jet' fleet, including the iconic 747-400 and its successor, the updated 747-8. Written off as fuel guzzlers by competitors, Lufthansa has found ways to make flying the 747s viable, much to the delight of many frequent flyers who specifically seek them out in the network.

At the same time, Lufthansa is not shy about bringing innovation to the business, as evidenced by the roll out of its new Allegris cabins, with a growing number of Airbus A350-900 aircraft and most recently the first Boeing 747-8s featuring the new premium interiors – including the one-of-its-kind first class product.

In the next 12 months, the Star Alliance founding member is also investing €70 million into its 'Future Onboard Experience' (FOX) project, with changes across all cabins expected in time for the carrier's 100th anniversary celebrations next spring. Upgrades cover everything from "the entire culinary offering" on long-haul services, to high-quality amenities, new tableware and upgraded textiles. Notable examples include business class customers being able to enjoy a second meal at a time of their choosing, while economy class passengers will have the choice of three (rather than two) meal options.

These long-haul product experience revolutions follow the introduction in early 2025 of a revamped dining experience for business class customers on short- and medium-haul flights lasting more than two hours, which include meal options by Austrian celebrity chef Johann Lafer in partnership with Gate Gourmet and Lufthansa's culinary teams.

Lufthansa is also renovating 30 of its lounges, following the unveiling of a

> 'It has a loyal customer base that embraces the airline for being a little different'

IMAGES **OLIVER ROESLER ORO PHOTOGRAPY**

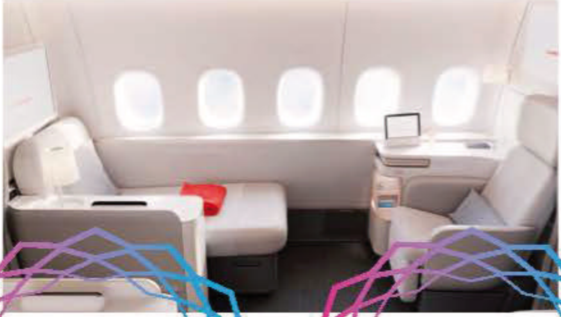
redesigned lounge in Newark Airport last year, and the reopening of its Heathrow T2 lounge earlier this year. Jens Ritter, CEO of Lufthansa Airlines, said the airline was "investing in exclusivity and comfort on the ground" by redesigning its first class check-in areas and lounges in Munich and Frankfurt.

There's clearly plenty to celebrate in the lead up to Lufthansa's centenary year – congratulations to the airline!

FLYING HIGH The airline offers an elevated experience on the ground as well as in the air

BEST OF THE REST

Best European Low-Cost Carrier easyJet
Best Airline Alliance in Europe Star Alliance
Best European Cabin Crew British Airways
Best Airline Between Europe and North America British Airways
Best Airline Between Europe and Africa British Airways
Best Airline Between Europe and the Middle East Qatar Airways
Best Airline Between Europe and Asia Pacific Singapore Airlines



BEST EUROPEAN FIRST CLASS

BEST EUROPEAN INFLIGHT FOOD AND BEVERAGE

AIR FRANCE

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

AIR FRANCE IS no stranger to glamorous travel; the airline and its crew are often deemed synonymous with elegance and style. But 2025 has seen the French flag carrier upgrade its premium offering even further – and *Business Traveller* readers have taken notice in this year's awards.

Most notable of Air France's recent updates is the revamp of its La Première cabins. The highly-anticipated new first class suites launched in April on a Boeing 777-300ER bound for JFK. Reminiscent of a private jet experience, the suites feature almost 3.5 sqm of space (up by 0.5 sqm from the previous design), an impressive stretch of five windows, and two gleaming 4k, 32-inch IFE screens positioned opposite the chaise longue and separate seat. Plus, first class passengers can relax in style, sporting a new navy Jacquemus pyjama set.

As for F&B, the French carrier has partnered with several chefs to bolster its first class menus. Summer saw the launch of three cocktails by mixologist Matthias Giroud, including a spicy alcohol-free serve, while, come December, the airline is introducing a seasonal menu by renowned chef Emmanuel Renaut and acclaimed pastry chef Claire Heitzler.

BEST EUROPEAN PREMIUM ECONOMY CLASS

BEST EUROPEAN ECONOMY CLASS

VIRGIN ATLANTIC

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

THIS YEAR, VIRGIN is taking the title of Best European Premium Economy Class, along with Best European Economy Class. The British carrier is a veteran in the premium economy field, having been one of the first to launch the new cabin class back in 1992. Then named 'Mid Class', it featured increased legroom and a complimentary pre-flight drink, plus a dedicated check-in counter and priority baggage handling.

Its premium economy has evolved significantly since then. Nowadays, the product is praised for details such as speedy wireless charging ports; faux leather upholstery to save on weight while looking stylish; and pop-out tray tables neatly concealed in the armrest. Bluetooth headphone connectivity (available on A330neo and A350-1000 aircraft) is also a highlight.

Passengers in all cabin classes can also look forward to free high-speed wifi – the carrier will begin installing Starlink wifi on its Boeing 787s, Airbus A350s and A330neos from Q3 2026, with rollout across the entire fleet to be completed by the end of 2027.

BEST OF THE REST

Best European Low-Cost Carrier: easyJet **Best Airline Alliance in Europe:** Star Alliance **Best European Cabin Crew:** British Airways **Best Airline between Europe and North America:** British Airways **Best Airline between Europe and Africa:** British Airways **Best Airline between Europe and the Middle East:** Qatar Airways **Best Airline between Europe and Asia Pacific:** Singapore Airlines

IMAGES ©AIR FRANCE; R. MARCON, LA PREMIÈRE. COURTESY OF VIRGIN ATLANTIC

BEST AIRLINE ALLIANCE

STAR ALLIANCE

Why the network continues to set the standard

WORDS **GEORGE GOMEZ**

For nearly three decades, Star Alliance has set the benchmark for global airline partnerships. Winning Best Airline Alliance is less about longevity and more about the way it continues to shape the passenger journey.

With 25 airlines across six continents and 17.4% of global air travellers passing through its network, the alliance is not just the biggest – it also remains the most impactful.

SEAMLESS JOURNEYS

Star Alliance's defining strength lies in its ability to make multi-airline itineraries feel like one continuous journey. Frequent travellers know the value of seamless seat selection, a seemingly small detail that often determines the comfort of long-haul connections. Today, the alliance covers 80% of interline itineraries with unified seat booking through a single airline app, saving passengers time and alleviating frustration.

Another quiet but significant innovation is baggage tracking across carriers. For those connecting on complex itineraries, knowing exactly where a checked bag is – especially when delayed – has become a major driver of passenger satisfaction.

> The alliance covers 80% of interline itineraries with unified seat booking through one app.

FROM ABOVE
HSBC Star Alliance credit card; branded jet

IMAGES **COURTESY OF STAR ALLIANCE**

"We believe the true test of customer service isn't whether challenges arise, but how effectively they're managed," says Theo Panagiotoulias, CEO of Star Alliance. "That philosophy guides our investments in digital solutions that simplify and reassure the traveller at every step."

LOUNGES, RAIL AND REAL VALUE

For business travellers, ground experience matters as much as time in the air. The alliance has invested selectively in its branded lounges – opening locations in Los Angeles, Paris and most recently Guangzhou – focusing on cities where a unified space adds genuine value.

Its pioneering partnership with Deutsche Bahn in Germany highlights another differentiator: intermodal travel. By allowing passengers to book rail and air on a single ticket, Star Alliance blends flexibility with sustainability, replacing short flights where high-speed trains make sense.

STAYING RELEVANT

The alliance has not been without challenges, losing long-time members SAS and Asiana. Yet its ability to maintain strong coverage in Scandinavia and Korea, while preparing to welcome ITA Airways in 2026, underscores its adaptability.

With major anchors such as Lufthansa, United, Singapore Airlines, ANA and Turkish Airlines, Star Alliance continues to balance stability with growth.

THE WINNING FORMULA

Awards alone do not define success, but Star Alliance's win at the 2025 *Business Traveller* Awards reflects what frequent flyers value most: predictability, consistency and convenience.

From unified booking and baggage tracking to curated lounges and intermodal innovation, the alliance demonstrates that global travel doesn't have to feel fragmented. For millions of travellers worldwide, Star Alliance is proof that an alliance can be more than a network – it can be a seamless journey.

→

SPOTLIGHT ON LONDON HEATHROW

The London hub's hospitality and shopping experiences rake in the awards

WORDS **RHYS JONES**

With the book on pandemic recovery finally closed, Heathrow Airport is once again looking to the future. In 2024, the hub welcomed a record 83.9 million passengers and expects to surpass that figure this year.

Inevitably, its existing infrastructure is starting to burst at the seams, with virtually all the terminals exceeding their initial design capacity. Earlier this year, Heathrow put forward its next five-year funding plan, proposing to increase passenger numbers by an additional 10 million – about 12% – by making better use of the existing terminals.

In the meantime, it has resurfaced plans for a third runway after being caught off-guard by the UK Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, backing proposals in January. Heathrow's proposals would see it increase capacity to 150 million passengers per year through a 3,500-metre runway and additional terminal buildings – while rival developer Arora Group has drawn up its own plans. (The extension of Terminal 2 across the former Terminal 1 site will occur either way, providing a new home for airlines currently operating from Terminal 3, the airport's oldest.) Whatever the government decides, the next few months and years will prove critical to the airport's growth plans.

> 'Heathrow's proposals would see it increase capacity to 150 million passengers per year'

The theme of renewal continues inside the terminals, with the opening of the No1 Lounge in T2, its Clubrooms spin-off in T3 (see page 78 for a review) and a Saudia Lounge in T4. Some of these are genuinely new spaces, adding crucial additional capacity for premium passengers. Meanwhile, almost all the Star Alliance lounges in T2 have been refurbished.

The airport has also welcomed new retailers – a new M&S opened in T5, while the first European airport outpost of Five Guys is set to open before year-end.

For those with more discerning tastes, an expanded Louis Vuitton shop and café has opened in T2 – Heathrow is the second airport to welcome an LV café worldwide after Doha. Other firsts include the first lululemon at a European airport, as well as refurbishments across luxury outlets including Paul Smith, Jo Malone and Burberry, so it comes as no surprise that Heathrow has been awarded **Best Airport Shopping Experience in Europe**.

For passengers who value privacy, the refurbishment and expansion of Heathrow's private departures and arrivals facility, The Windsor, is also an inviting proposition. A rotating selection of original artwork from David Hockney to Andy Warhol welcomes VIPs, while Tom Dixon furniture and fine dining by Jason Atherton ensures guests can enjoy the same levels of luxury they do at home.

RETAIL GOLD Heathrow opened the first lululemon shop at a European airport in July

BEST AIRPORT HOTEL IN EUROPE

SOFITEL LONDON HEATHROW, T5

THE SOFITEL HOTEL at Heathrow ticks off everything you want from an airport hotel, including a direct walkway to T5 and suitably soundproofed rooms – perfect for late arrivals and early departures. But what if you want a little more? An executive lounge serves breakfast, afternoon tea and canapés for those with status or staying in a Club Room, while the spa features a sauna, steam room and hot tub to unwind before or after your flight. And if you're hungry, you have not one but five different restaurants and bars to choose from.

BEST AIRLINE LOUNGE IN EUROPE

VIRGIN ATLANTIC CLUBHOUSE LHR, T3

VIRGIN'S FLAGSHIP CLUBHOUSE once again tops the list for Best Airline Lounge in Europe. The original arbiter of cool, it will soon get a facelift as part of a major investment in the airline's passenger experience. Until then, expect classic 70s-inspired style crossed with Virgin's typical red flair; a mezzanine level is designed to evoke the upper deck of a 747, once the backbone of the airline's fleet. Feeling peckish? Vivienne Westwood-clad staff offer table service with restaurant-quality meals, Champagne and cocktails to order.

BEST THIRD PARTY LOUNGE IN EUROPE

AMEX CENTURION LOUNGE LHR, T3

UNHAPPY WITH THE quality of independent airport lounges, American Express decided it could do it better and launched its Centurion Lounge collection. Its London location, which opened in 2021, remains as popular as ever. Amex worked hard to turn this windowless space into an enjoyable lounge. The designers took inspiration from British culture and history, with artwork of Elton John and traditional panel moulding, while the signature blue doors could belong to the home of a certain Time Lord...

WHILE HEATHROW IS HOME TO SEVERAL AWARD WINNERS,
AMSTERDAM SCHIPHOL AIRPORT WAS VOTED THE BEST AIRPORT IN EUROPE

IMAGES **COURTESY OF HEATHROW AIRPORT; COURTESY OF VIRGIN ATLANTIC; AMERICAN EXPRESS**

BEST REGIONAL RAIL NETWORK

EUROSTAR

WORDS **HANNAH BRANDLER**

FOR THE FIRST time in the history of the *Business Traveller* Awards, we have introduced a rail category – responding to the ever-growing demand for eco-friendly travel. Coming out on top is Eurostar, a feat to add to some major recent milestones. The operator merged with Belgian brand Thalys in 2023 to offer a larger five-country network – complete with greater ticket flexibility, an aligned loyalty scheme and vibrant new branding. Plus, it celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, launched premium dining menus with top chefs, and revived its Snap service for discounted last-minute bookings.

Here, we look at some of Eurostar's further initiatives to become an even bigger player over the next decade.

Rail to air, plus new routes

Eurostar has become the first non-airline member of the SkyTeam alliance, allowing customers to combine long and mid-haul flights with their connecting Eurostar trip in a single booking. Eurostar is also planning to operate direct services from London to Frankfurt and Geneva in the early 2030s – made possible by the purchase of 50 new trains.

Capacity creativity

Eurostar and London St. Pancras Highspeed have signed a letter of intent to more than double capacity at St. Pancras International by the end of 2028, with Hawkins\Brown behind the design. The rail operator says that it will feature smart design "by remodelling and redefining the existing space and processes" to enhance passenger flow and avoid overcrowding. The plan aims to improve security and border controls to ensure the processing of 2,700 passengers per hour over the next four years, and handle 5,000 towards the end of the decade.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK Eurostar goes from strength to strength

> 'Eurostar became the first non-airline member of SkyTeam'

Fit for rail

Last month, Eurostar fashioned a catwalk onboard one of its trains to debut its new uniforms. The 54-piece collection features French navy-blue garments, graffiti-print neckerchiefs inspired by street art in Brussels and Amsterdam, and dark green Dr Martens boots in true British style. Designed by Emmanuelle Plescoff, the collection fits "all genders, body types and personal styles".

End-to-end eco

Rail might get you from the departure to destination in a sustainable manner, but what about transport upon arrival? Eurostar's new bicycle policy allows customers to reserve spaces for their bikes when buying tickets for cross-Channel routes – with continental routes to follow.

Winter wonders

The Eurostar Snow service returns on 20 December from London to the French ski resort Bourg-Saint-Maurice until 5 April, 2026.

Bread into beer

Should you skip the baguette onboard, you might experience its second life in a pint glass. French brewery Pain de Minuit transforms 570kg of unsold bread from Eurostar Premier carriages on continental routes into craft beer – with plans to extend this to cross-Channel routes.

HOT ON THE WHEELS

2nd: SBB (Swiss Federal Railways)
3rd: Avanti West Coast
4th: DB (Deutsche Bahn)
5th: ÖBB (Österreichische Bundesbahnen)

ON THE ROAD? **SIXT** WINS BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY IN EUROPE

IMAGES **EUROSTAR**

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BUSINESS TRAVELLER AWARDS
EUROPE
WINNER
BEST CAR RENTAL COMPANY IN EUROPE

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REACHING *NEW* HYATTS

Get to know three of Hyatt's award-winning brands

WORDS **LAURA MILLAR**

BEST UPSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN EUROPE

HYATT REGENCY

Brand ethos
Hyatt Regency's forward-thinking philosophy is all about bringing people together, with hotels more like social hubs where you can work, relax and connect.

Services and facilities
You'll find world-class amenities such as 24/7 fitness centres, relaxing spas and wellbeing services, as well as pools and outdoor gathering spaces. Well-appointed rooms and spacious suites feature regionally-inspired artwork, expansive workstations and 65" TVs.

Target guest
Business and leisure travellers; Hyatt Regency hotels are primarily known for hosting corporate events from conferences to trade shows and retreats.

Price point
The Churchill, London, has rooms starting from £325 per night

Number of properties
237

New openings
Hyatt Regency Zadar, Croatia opened in May 2025; Hyatt Regency London Olympia is due to open May 2026.

BEST MIDSCALE HOTEL BRAND IN EUROPE

HYATT PLACE

Brand ethos
Hyatt Place combines style, innovation and 24/7 conveniences designed for busy, on-the-go travellers who want space to both unwind and get things done.

Services and facilities
Spacious, thoughtfully designed rooms feature separate sleep, work and chill-out areas, plus handy extras like mini fridges and desks. Most properties include gyms, wifi and communal space; many are pet-friendly, too. Hyatt Place's Necessities programme provides everyday essentials like toothbrushes or chargers.

Target guest
Professionals who want a stress-free base, as well as families and solo travellers who like modern comfort.

Price point
Hyatt Place London City East has rooms from £132 per night.

Number of properties
17

New openings
Hyatt Place Leeds opened in March 2025; while Hyatt Place Tallinn opened in August 2025.

BEST EXTENDED STAY BRAND IN EUROPE

HYATT HOUSE

Brand ethos
Think: hotel meets home. Hyatt House is designed for longer stays or anyone who wants more space and a few home comforts while travelling.

Services and facilities
Guestrooms come with spacious layouts, contemporary kitchens, living rooms and modern media consoles, while perks include a complimentary breakfast, the H Bar (a central gathering spot where you can have a bite or just hang out), 24/7 grab-and-go H Market, fitness room, laundry, pools (most locations), free wifi, pet-friendly options and a convenient 'Borrows Menu' for everyday essentials.

Target guest
Professionals on secondment, families or couples who'd rather feel like locals than guests, even if it's just for a weekend.

Price point
Hyatt House London Stratford has rooms from £164 per night.

Number of properties
10

New openings
Hyatt House Leeds opened in March 2025.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF HYATT**

BEST HOTEL BRAND FOR CONFERENCES IN EUROPE

CUTTING-EDGE CONFERENCES

Marriott scores for its spectacular spread of event spaces. Here are three of its most impressive venues

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

London Marriott Hotel County Hall

Formerly used as London's City Hall in the 1920s, this Westminster hotel has a charming British character. Its heritage has been maintained in the 12 conference spaces, with period artwork, relic fireplaces and rich wooden panels. But modern-day needs are fully catered for, with high-spec video-conferencing, AV equipment and presentation screens.

Munich Marriott Hotel City West

Munich Marriott Hotel City West stands out for its technological capabilities. You'll find a striking 23-metre screen and a moving platform for dramatic product presentations – it's large enough to fit a car – while the building's facade can be illuminated in brand colours. Plus, a team of AV specialists are on hand to make sure all goes smoothly.

Riviera Marriott Hotel La Porte de Monaco

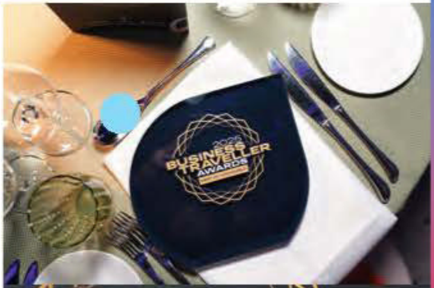
Delegates will be graced with dreamy views of bobbing yachts and breezy palms thanks to the property's seaside location of Cap d'Ail, just south of Monaco. The Monte Carlo ballroom was renovated last year to echo the glamorous setting, now styled with an elegant palette of beige and bright white, with sleek powder green furnishings.

BEST OF THE REST

Best Luxury Hotel Brand in Europe: Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts **Best Budget Hotel Brand in Europe:** Holiday Inn Express **Best Independent Hotel Brand in Europe:** The Leading Hotels of the World **Best Hotel Loyalty Programme in Europe:** Hilton Honors

IMAGES KILIAN BLEES; COURTESY OF MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL; DANIEL HERENDI

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER
Guests gathered at London's iconic Sky Garden venue with stunning views over the city to celebrate the winners of this year's awards, which included Emirates for Best Premium Economy in the World (bottom).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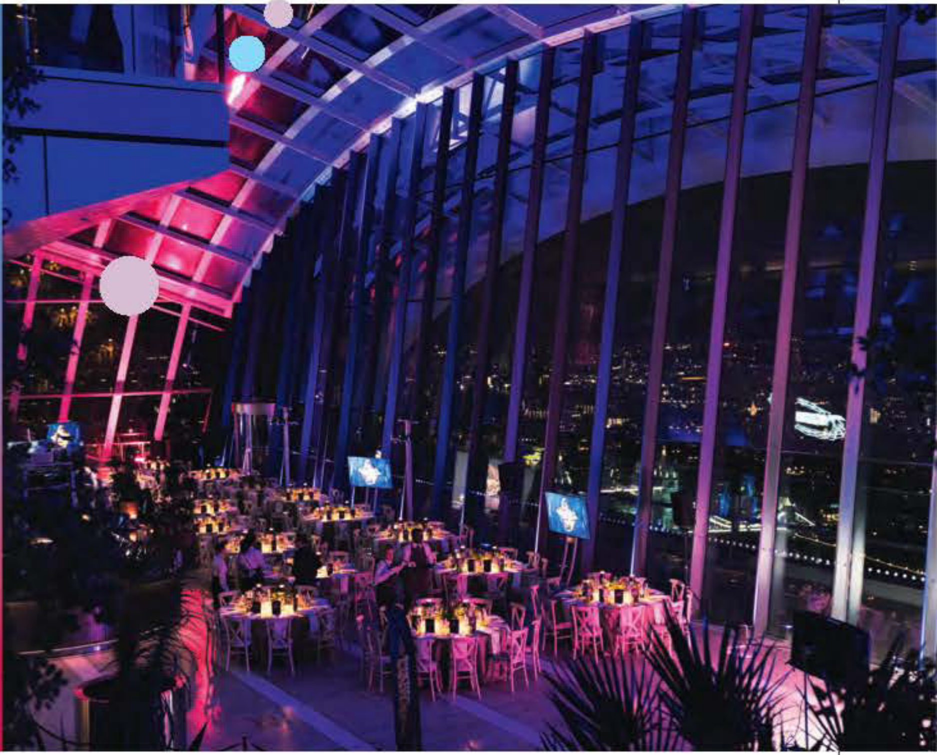

CELEBRATING *EXCELLENCE*

Memorable moments from the *Business Traveller* Awards at London's Sky Garden

PHOTOGRAPHS **CAMERON KERNAHAN/VOYAGER VISUAL**

SKY GARDEN
CITY GARDEN

DELTA
VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS
ASPIRE

MOMENTS OF GLORY (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT)
Winners included the team from Virgin Atlantic; guests discover the panel of judges; news correspondent James Longman hosted the awards; Amex Centurion wins for Best Third Party Lounge in Europe; Ink CEO Michael Keating and JetVine CEO Kelly Stevenson

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HOTEL REVIEW
Mondrian Hong Kong

LOUNGE REVIEW
Clubrooms Heathrow T3

SPA REVIEW
The HVN, Knightsbridge

RESTAURANT REVIEW
AngloThai, London

Review

Putting business travel to the test

HOTEL REVIEW

Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest

Refined luxury awaits within this majestic structure on the Danube

HOTEL Review

WORDS
NICK REMSEN

PREVIOUS PAGE: Múzsa lobby bar

THIS PAGE: The Royal Suite; the hotel facade

IMAGES **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL GRESHAM PALACE BUDAPEST**

What's it like?

The hotel displays an architectural fusion that doesn't come across as radical, but rather just the right mix of periods. Built in 1906 as the Hungarian headquarters for the Gresham Life Assurance Society, the converted property now plays host to presidents, prime ministers and pop stars, all of whom are discreetly ferried through its soaring lobby and beneath its wrought-iron flourishes.

For decades under communist rule, the Palace's stature withered, eventually becoming derelict by the late 20th century. But that's all far in the rear-view mirror now. The hotel opened under the Four Seasons brand in 2004 following extensive renovations and repairs.

Rooms

The Gresham Palace's rooms are spacious and well-appointed, with cool palettes that blend nicely with regal proportions. Suites face the Danube River, which cuts a swath in front of the hotel beyond a small plaza and thoroughfare, over which locals and tourists amble. It's not unusual to grab a bottle of wine and sit along the Danube's bank at sunset.

Past that postcard vignette and across the water, the hills of Buda rise like golden loaves in the morning and glow purple in the twilight. There are few better vantage points in the city for both views and proximity (Budapest is divided into two parts, with Buda on the west and Pest on the east).

Facilities

The hotel offers plenty of pleasures in its luxe environs, especially for those who have flown in from far-away time zones and might be needing a little R&R.

The first: try a classic martini at Kollázs, the restaurant on the ground floor of the hotel. Sit at the corner bar at dusk – the hotel usually keeps the doors open for a breeze, at least during warmer months – and savour the sophistication of the tried-and-true (and perfectly strong) cocktail.

The second: a light bite and bespoke libation at Múzsa, which is ostensibly a lobby bar and restaurant that's as ornate as Kollázs, but a different experience nonetheless. Here, a menu of expertly crafted cocktails awaits, named after Muses (Greek goddesses), and the offerings are elaborate and poetic – with a number of non-alcoholic choices also available. Cuisine-wise, indulge in Asian-inspired fare at the counter or sip tea in the afternoon from Herend porcelain (a Hungarian signature), all while soaking up the impressive Art Nouveau surroundings. This is also a great place to bring your laptop.

And finally, head to the spa on the hotel's uppermost floor. Take a dip in the pool and elevated hot tub, which looks out over the swimming basin as if from a perch. Budapest bustles below, but up here, it's the little indulgences that go the longest way.

Major attractions within walking distance of the hotel include the famous – and recently updated – Chain Bridge (which spans the water directly in front of the hotel entrance), Parliament and the jaw-dropping Hungarian State Opera House.

GOOD TO KNOW

Budapest has a high concentration of thermal baths, including the Széchenyi Bath

VERDICT

Join the many stars who call this timeless hotel home when in the Hungarian capital. Though thermal baths await outside, old-world sophistication reigns within.

BEST FOR

Sense-driven pleasures in a majestic structure on the banks of the Danube River

DON'T MISS

A martini moment at dusk in the hotel's palatial surrounds

PRICE
Rates for an entry-level Superior Room start from €556.

CONTACT
Széchenyi István Tér 5-6,
Budapest, 1051; +36 (1) 268 6000;
fourseasons.com

WORDS
STEVE WHITE

Mondrian Hong Kong

The hotel offers an artsy, eclectic alternative to a cookie-cutter stay

What's it like?
The vibe and facilities of the Mondrian Hong Kong are not those of your typical business venue; instead the hotel leans into its sense of place and embraces its artistic licence.

Opened at the end of 2023, the Mondrian is secreted amid the bars and cafés of Hart Avenue in Tsim Sha Tsui. This leaves it just a couple of blocks from the famous Victoria Harbour, granting sea and city views from many of the rooms.

An aquatic theme is present in the decor throughout, with illuminated rings of bubbles rising from the reception area, helping to give an airy and bright first impression. The walls on each floor add further whimsy, offering a Jules Verne-ian vision of life under an enchanted sea. In this octopus's garden, the marine creature has a rabbit's head; throughout the hotel you'll also spot a moose-whale, a fishicken and a puffer-crab.

Rooms
The 324 rooms and suites are more cosy than expansive, with regular rooms ranging from 21 to 32 sqm. I had the luxury of staying in one of the 12 Harbour suites, which have a lounge and second bathroom to stretch it to 49 sqm.

There's a strong contemporary feel overall. A liquorice-striped table (rather than a desk) offers great views and is accompanied by Mondrian-esque colour in the seats and rugs. Other furnishings and finishes show keen knowledge of the local vernacular, which will please those with close ties to the city.

STAY IN STYLE Creativity shines through the bold design within the hotel's Harbour suites

The suites also come with a stylish lacquered drinks cabinet complete with bar sets for crafting cocktails, as well as a water purifier, high-speed internet and lavish Malin + Goetz bathroom products.

Facilities
The hotel has various dining venues to choose from. Cocktail bar Avoca is the focal point for meetings with seating options ranging from quieter snugs to seats at the bar. The Hong Kong-themed cocktails include a tonsil-tickling *haam neng mung* (an unusual take on local favourite salted lemonade). DJ sets further brighten up the space on Friday and Saturday evenings.

If instead you want to put the meat into your meetings, head to steakhouse Carna, where ebullient Italian chef Dario Cecchini is an unabashed carnivore who glories in platters of beef twice the size of your head. A healthy appetite is essential, preferably at least two of them so you can share.

VERDICT

A stay to tickle arty types with quirky spaces encouraging creativity rather than boardroom presentations.

BEST FOR

Meat-lovers, aquanauts and old Hong Kong hands.

DON'T MISS

Views of one of the world's great harbours from the futuristic Tsim Sha Tsui skyline.

PRICE
Rates start from HK$1,530 (US$200).

CONTACT
8A, Hart Avenue,
Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon;
+852 3550 0388;
mondrianhotels.com

IMAGES GRAHAM UDEN/MONDRIAN

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

Clubrooms London Heathrow T3

The upscale lounge brings a leafy look to concrete surrounds

What's it like?
No1 Lounges' premium Clubrooms brand opened in Heathrow's T3 in April, joining its existing sites at Gatwick (North and South terminals) and Birmingham Airport.

The crux of Clubrooms is that it offers a more premium and tailored service to customers aged 12 and over. Staff greet you and guide you to a table of your choosing, before offering à la carte table service.

At 390 sqm, the space has an exclusive and cosy feel, and 116 seats. Despite being open-plan, it feels like there are two distinct zones – with lounge areas characterised by a darker royal blue and silver colour scheme, with herringbone wooden flooring and walls of black-and-white photographs. Meanwhile, a calming orangery features a Mediterranean look, with soft fabrics and lighter beige and sea-green colour palettes. The light-filled orangery truly sets the lounge apart from its competitors – with views overlooking the airfield. At the heart of the space is a beautiful olive tree, encircled by banquettes, while further foliage planters and leafy canopies give the room an alfresco feel. It's a zen escape, worlds away from the terminal's frantic built-up spaces – a spot to boost vitamin D before a long-haul flight.

FROM ABOVE
Enjoy eggs in the morning, and a sunny orangery area to relax before your flight

Facilities
The key difference at Clubrooms is table service, with AM and PM menus offering hot and cold dishes. During my morning visit this included egg dishes and continental fare, while afternoon menus feature salads, sandwiches and comforting mains. Signature dishes include American-style pancakes and falafel mezze.

Guests can order endless light bites but are limited to three hot dishes. Coffee, tea and juices are self-serve, while staff prepare complimentary cocktails, wines and beers. We enjoyed bucks fizz at the respectable hour of 9am, while others were suitably buzzed on espresso martinis – Champagne has an extra charge.

Buffets make sense for speedy lounge visits, but I found the table service to be suitably quick. One note would be that the food presentation could use some more care – my avocado on toast was a little drab.

Flight information screens keep you plugged into the terminal, while charging points are installed in seating areas throughout.

Access
Once through security, follow signs for Lounge F – No1 Lounge and Clubrooms are adjacent to each other, though the latter is along the corridor, which isn't immediately obvious when queues form for No1. It's open daily from 5am until 9pm, and guests can access three hours prior to flight time. The space is free for Priority Pass, Lounge Key and DragonPass cardholders, but £15 to pre-book. Those without such memberships will instead need to pay £48 for entry – £10 more than the No1 Lounge.

BEST FOR

A leafy VIP space before you're boxed into a plane for a long-haul trip.

VERDICT

This is a refreshing addition to Heathrow's rather tired Terminal 3, adding biophilic design and premium service to business travellers' pre-flight experience.
no1lounges.com

IMAGES **ANTHONY BRYANT**

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

The HVN, Knightsbridge, London

We trial a jetlag-busting package after an intensive week of back-to-back flights

What's it like?
The choice of initials makes perfect sense as soon as you step foot into this wellness clinic in Knightsbridge. Curved wooden structures cocoon you from other guests while soothing moss living walls, jade-green colour palettes, circadian lighting and birdsong recorded in Epping Forest distance you from the urban surrounds. And all of this before you even reach the generously sized treatment rooms for some high-end pampering.

The treatment
HVN offers everything from acupuncture and aesthetic work to IV infusions, with practitioners offering personalised consultations and treatments tailored to your concerns.

In my case, I was testing out the new 90-minute Anti-Jetlag Programme, hoping to restore my brittle bones, dry skin and flagging energy after a week punctuated by four flights (both short- and long-haul) – an unhealthy combination for both body and climate. I followed the advice to book within 24-48 hours of travel, and arrived feeling rather dishevelled with full-blown brain fog.

After completing several forms regarding my lifestyle, routine and medical history, I was guided to the first step of my anti-jetlag journey by the warm and incredibly knowledgeable practitioner Florina.

The programme kicked off with a 30-minute stint in a Hyperbaric Oxygen Chamber – a pod that resembles something that's about to lift off into outer space. The pod is pressurised 1.5 times greater than normal atmospheric pressure, and delivers 100% pure oxygen to clients via a mask – a big increase compared to the 21% oxygen in normal air outside (which is even less at altitude).

GOOD TO KNOW

You can combine spa and retail therapy with a stroll down Knightsbridge – even if it's just to window shop at Harrods.

Oxygen therapy helps to repair and regenerate cells, while also boosting collagen, and is popular with those recovering from surgery. Once the ear popping subsided, it had a meditative effect.

Next up was my HydrO2Facial, which went beyond traditional facial bounds, incorporating technology and tailored approaches to cleanse, exfoliate and rehydrate my skin. We talked through my nutrition, skin routine and hectic travel lifestyle for 15-20 minutes beforehand to ensure that the treatment suited my skin. As put by my practitioner, "your body gives you whispers when something isn't right" – whether through breakouts or hair falling out. To maximise results, I wore a Body Ballancer® suit during the treatment, which uses compressed air to apply a rhythmic massage-like motion that helps with lymphatic drainage and fluid retention along your legs and hips.

With all three treatments complete, I left feeling calmer and more energised – but the longer-lasting effects kicked in later on. I was totally knocked out that evening, which is a real win for an insomniac, and woke up the next morning with formerly inflamed spots reduced threefold and a puffy face on the mend. I may even heed Florina's advice and wear a face mask on my next long-haul trip – never mind my neighbours.

NESTLED IN Biophilic interiors create a calming sanctuary

IMAGES **COURTESY OF HVN**

VERDICT

I'm usually cynical about jetlag-busting promises, but this three-in-one treatment did wonders to salvage my sluggish state. I returned to work on a Monday no more tired than previous busy weekends – and with a far more glowing look and attitude.

PRICE
The 90-minute anti-jetlag package costs £375

CONTACT
57-63 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7BF; 0207 160 0003; *the-hvn.com*

RESTAURANT **Review**

WORDS
TAMSIN COCKS

AngloThai, London

Is this Michelin-starred Thai showcase of British produce worth the hype?

What's it like?
Tucked down Seymour Place, just ten minutes from Marble Arch, lies the lavender-hued exterior of AngloThai – inviting, surprising and tasteful – a portent of things to come.

It's the debut London restaurant from husband-and-wife team John and Desiree Chantarasak – John being half British and half Thai, hence the concept.

The decor throughout is warm and welcoming, referencing Thailand's contemporary design movement. Dark Chamchuri wood furniture, for example, transports you to the northern mountains of Thailand, where it was created by Chiang Mai artisan, Moonler.

The room was full and buzzing by 7pm, with around 40 covers and a live kitchen.

Food and drink
Diners receive a set menu (with vegan and pescatarian options), alongside an extensive wine list – we opted for the soft tropical flavours of house white wine, Aubretia.

The meal started strong with an amuse bouche – a few gulps of crab broth packed with cheek-smacking flavours: spicy, sour, umami and fresh herbs.

Next, a trio of bite-size starters on brightly coloured plates: kohlrabi with candied beetroot, mackerel with a spicy rhubarb and horseradish sauce, and a chicken skewer with a fiery coconut marinade.

One of the standout dishes was tender octopus tentacles with Thai chilli jam and coconut lime dressing. Our waiter explained climate change has been driving marine creatures from the Mediterranean to the UK – making them fair game for restaurants focused on celebrating local produce.

The crescendo moment was lamb three ways, with spicy sausage representing a classic northern Thai speciality and served with spelt (as rice doesn't grow in the UK), tiny salty-sweet bursts of cockles and a dill-infused curry sauce.

GOOD TO KNOW

There's a private dining room for 16 people for those looking to impress friends or clients.

The most divisive course? Ox cheek jungle curry with a rich, succulent sauce. The Western twist was a soft, honey-coated brioche instead of roti. Points for creativity, but I'm not sure it would win in a fair fight.

Dessert, meanwhile, was a delicious Thai take on a crème brûlée – a fruity coconut flan, featuring blackcurrant leaf, beetroot and strawberries with ice cream. One more parting gift arrived – *kanom lek* – a traditional sweet treat, before we could dab our napkins for the final time.

Service
Waiters offer warm, relaxed and intuitive service, while also accommodating dietary needs and preferences.

VERDICT

AngloThai is a treat for the eyes, mouth and soul – offering a wonderful journey through Thai flavours and cultural heritage, starring British produce.

BEST FOR

Gourmands who like their Michelin stars paired with relaxed, friendly service

DON'T MISS

The exceptional coconut ash crackers with crab meat and coconut cream (pictured).

PRICE
Set menus cost £125 per person, with an optional drinks pairing at £95.

CONTACT
22-24 Seymour Place, London WIH 7NL; 020 3307 8800; *anglothai.co.uk*

IMAGES: BEN BROOMFIELD @PHOTOBENPHOTO

WORDS
JEREMY TAYLOR

Fiat 500e Giorgio Armani

Fiat's new EV is a tribute to the late fashion icon

Background

The latest Fiat 500e special edition pays homage to a true Italian icon and will be catnip for catwalkers. A collaboration with the late Giorgio Armani, this glitzy Italian runabout is a must-have accessory for fashionistas who thrive on car couture. Based on a 500e city car, the Collector's Edition is dressed up in dark green or ceramic greige, colours created by the grand master of fashion himself.

Features

The understated paintwork is classic Armani – only 'GA' logos on the custom wheels hint at the link to high fashion. Inside, however, plenty of Armani branding is splashed about a luxurious cabin.

Three-dimensional chevron seat patterns are said to evoke traditional tailoring techniques, while laser-cut wood adorns a dashboard finished with the maestro's signature, a moniker that pops up everywhere. Despite a tiny trunk and cramped rear seats, the eco-conscious 500e is perfect for shorter trips. Thanks to diminutive dimensions, it doesn't make a fuss when squeezed into a tight parking space and is zippy around town.

Equipment upgrades on the Armani edition include eye-catching LED headlamps, a glass roof and top-of-the-range JBL music system. Hook up your mobile to a 10.25-inch touchscreen with Android Auto or Apple CarPlay.

The Fiat is less comfortable on longer journeys, with noticeable noise at higher speeds and susceptibility to crosswinds. The official battery range is 199 miles but 150 is more realistic in real-world driving conditions.

This compact Fiat makes a statement without being ostentatious. A feel-good car with a heritage to match, the battery-powered 500e will suit urban dwellers who want to cut a real dash about town.

VERDICT

The 500e gets a fashion makeover courtesy of Armani. Discreet design touches help create a chic and unique supermini that's most at home in the city.

PRICE
£34,035
CONTACT
fiat.co.uk

LIMITED EDITION
Only 500 Fiat 500e Giorgio Armani autos will be made this year

IMAGES **COURTESY OF STELLANTIS**

The Quiz

Test your knowledge of travel firsts and feats with this month's quiz

1 Which airline currently operates the longest, nonstop commercial flight?

A) Qantas
B) Singapore Airlines
C) Air India
D) Emirates

2 In which city will you find the world's longest underground rail system (by route length)?

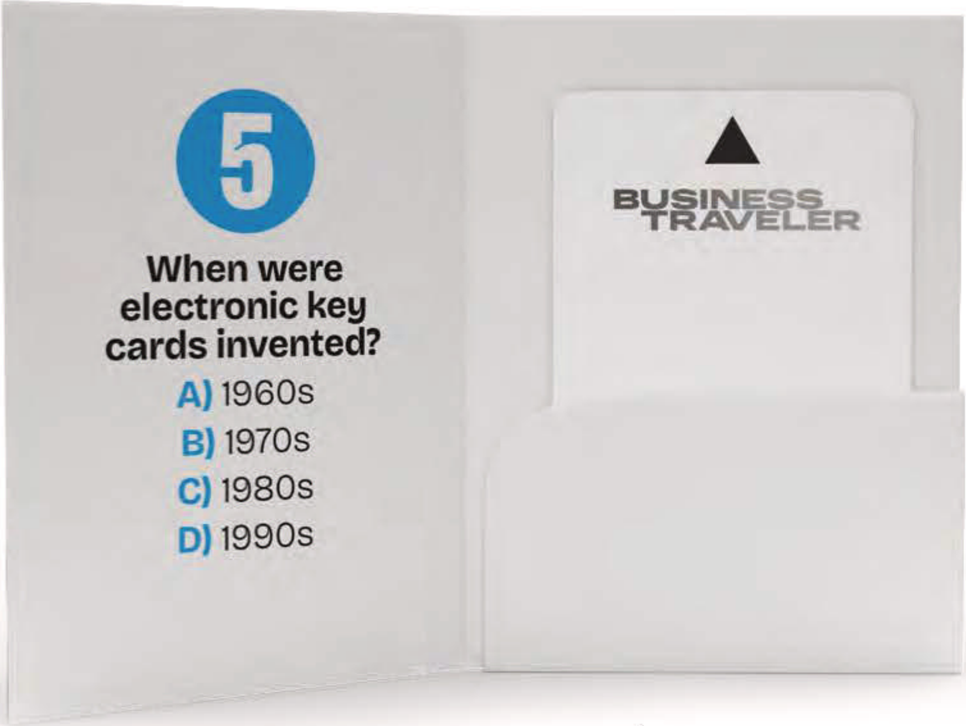
A) London
B) Beijing
C) Mexico City
D) Shanghai

3 Which airline holds the Guinness World Record for 'Most Countries Flown to by an Airline'?

A) United Airlines
B) Air China
C) Qatar Airways
D) Turkish Airlines

4 Which was the first hotel in the world to introduce room service?

A) Raffles, Singapore
B) Waldorf Astoria, New York
C) The Savoy, London
D) Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi



5 When were electronic key cards invented?

A) 1960s
B) 1970s
C) 1980s
D) 1990s

6 Which airline's cabin crew were the first to wear trainers as part of their uniform?

A) SkyUP
B) KLM
C) Virgin Atlantic
D) Finnair

7 How many rooms does Malaysia's First World Hotel (the largest hotel in the world) have?

A) 4,902
B) 6,852
C) 7,351
D) 8,216

8 Lufthansa was the first airline to introduce what onboard its flights in 2003?

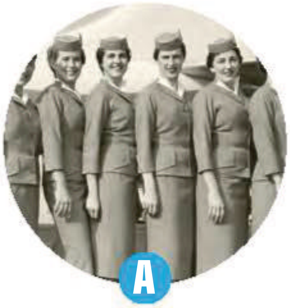
A) Inflight internet
B) IFE screens
C) Champagne in business class
D) Wireless charging ports

9 What is the fastest someone has circumnavigated the Earth via scheduled flights?

A) 44 hours
B) 66 hours
C) 25 hours
D) 37 hours

PHOTO ROUND

Can you identify the airline from these historic cabin crew uniforms?



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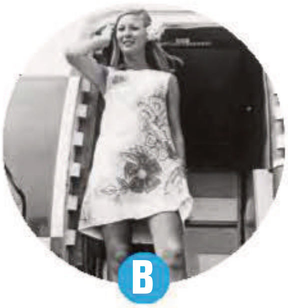

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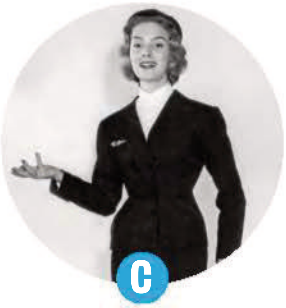

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ANSWERS: 1B, 2D, 3D, 4B, 5B, 6A, 7C, 8D, 9A

Uniform round: A Pan Am, **B** British Airways, **C** Air France

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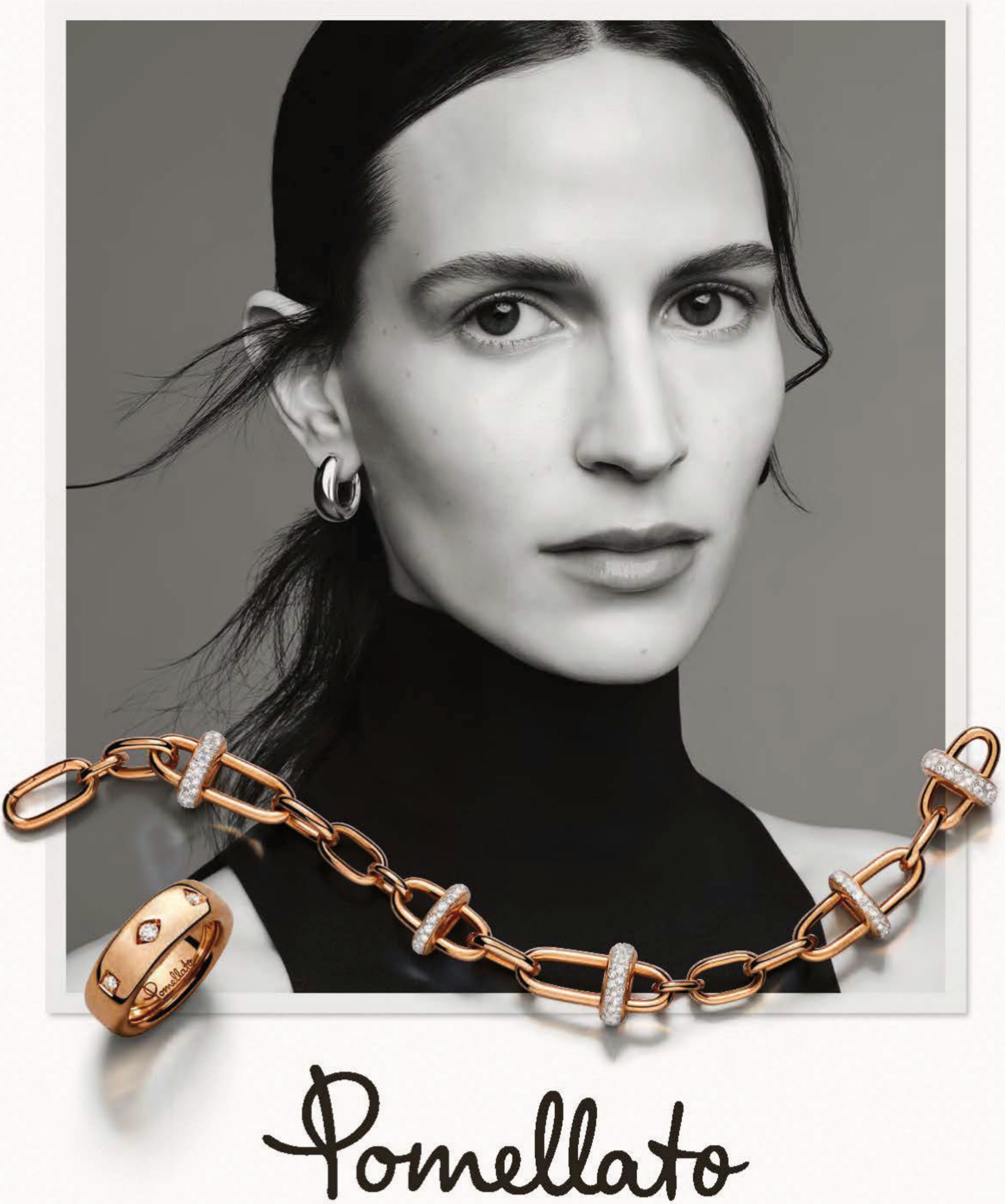

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